The Catholic

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The Catholic

THE CATHOLIC

A TALE OF
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

JOHN LANE: THE BODLEY HEAD
NEW YORK & LONDON MCMIV

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AUTHOR'S ADVERTISEMENT

This is a "picture of life," not a novel with a purpose. The author has endeavoured to put into artistic form the results of his observation of a section of contemporary English society interested in the Roman Catholic Church, with a view, neither of attacking nor defending that Church, but of portraying character in association with it. The story is the record of a struggle between a proud Englishwoman and a great spiritual power. She is not held up to the admiration nor to the reprobation of the reader; judgement is not passed upon her by the author; she is merely presented.

THE CATHOLIC

PART I

THE MAGNETIC INFLUENCE

CHAPTER I

"Aristocratic Rome"

"You make Rome too attractive," said the Cardinal with a grim smile.

"That is impossible, your Eminence," returned Monsignor Vancelour.

Monsignor was a member of an old Catholic family, a man of forty, rich, handsome, and of courtly bearing. He had "lived in the world" till his thirtieth year and for a while was attached to the embassy at Vienna; he may therefore have loved an Archduchess, she may have returned his passion, and the frustration of their union may have been the cause of his entering the priesthood. After his ordination he asked Cardinal Grimsby to attach him to a mission in the East-end of London. "I wish to work among God's poor," said he. "No doubt you do," returned the prelate; "but you must mortify that very natural desire, for you are called to work among—the rich!"

Thereupon Vancelour purchased a site for St. Peter's in a fashionable quarter of London, and built the church at his own expense. It was one of the most beautiful modern Gothic structures in the metropolis, cruciform in shape, a cathedral in miniature, with double aisles, clerestory, and triforium. The exterior was comparatively plain, the interior very rich, a blaze of colour, with its marble, bronze and alabaster altars, mosaics, glass and pictures. Good taste was displayed in the decorations; there was no tinsel on the altars, there were no sham flowers, rags, or ugly dolls; the chalices, monstrances, vestments, and banners were of magnificent workmanship. The general effect of the interior was extremely impressive; the colours harmonised and the eye was not bewildered by the elaborate architectural detail.

The members of the Catholic aristocracy formed the nucleus of the congregation of St. Peter's, and upon the Sundays in the London season the church was crowded with fashionable people, many of whom were not Catholics. These were attracted by the beautiful building, the solemn services, the gorgeous music and ceremonial, and the preaching of Monsignor Vancelour; in their own words, they visited the church "to see Romanism at its best." On the other hand, St. Peter's was not popular with God's poor, namely, the Irish, who declared that it was "little better than a Protestant temple!"

Though not an intellectual man, not subtle, not much of a theologian, Monsignor Vancelour had achieved a considerable reputation in London society.

Noble dames liked to coquet with this handsome and dignified representative of Rome. The phrase "he is a priest without a sting," which was frequently to be heard at the time dealt with in this narrative, owed its origin to the fact that he rarely indulged in controversy and never attacked other creeds; the implication that he was therefore "harmless" was not, however, correct, for he was very successful in "converting" people to the Church of Rome.

But in spite of the success of his mission, Monsignor was disliked and distrusted by his ecclesiastical superior, Cardinal Grimsby. Malicious gossips whispered that the famous prelate was jealous of him, but that idea may be dismissed; better-informed people declared that the Cardinal regarded him as a priest lacking in "grit," as a sentimental and a weak ecclesiastic, who dwelt too much upon the sensuous aspect of Catholicism. His Eminence was apt to be jocose at Monsignor's expense, and had dropped the phrase "feather-bed monk" in reference to him; the Cardinal rarely visited St. Peter's Church, and when he did go there he was not very agreeable. He would sniff, move his shrunken jaws up and down, and mutter, "Aristocratic Rome. H'm. Yes. I do not like Aristocratic Rome! Send Macdonald to me."

Father Macdonald, one of Monsignor's assistant priests, was a long, lean, ascetic Scotchman, an excellent theologian, the author of a well-known Roman Catholic treatise entitled, "Objective Worship." Rumour said that the Cardinal had attached him to St. Peter's that he might keep an eye upon the rec-

tor, Monsignor Vancelour, and counteract his influence. Father Macdonald's methods of advancing the interests of Rome were the converse of those pursued by Monsignor; he was a rigid dogmatist, and in his representation the "Great Mother" assumed a forbidding aspect. He did battle with the heretic and gave him no quarter, he hurled Rome's thunderbolts at disbelievers and the "children of the world." Accordingly, when he was advertised to preach at St. Peter's the majority of the congregation went elsewhere, and the casual visitors who listened to his discourse reconsidered their favourable opinion of the Church of Rome. Still he had his admirers and was held in respect by the Catholic world. It was said that he "kept the conscience" of the Cardinal and had influence with that prelate; he was indeed a man of power in his way and capable of producing a deep impression upon timid souls.

Monsignor's other assistant priest, Father Jones, was altogether out of his element at St. Peter's. He had formerly been stationed at Wapping, and before his removal to the West-end had never so much as seen a *grande dame*. On being attached to St. Peter's, he obtained leave of the rector to establish a series of "popular services" at the church, and hunted up such poor as dwelt in the small parish. He engaged some stalwart Irishmen to sing English hymns on the Wednesday and Saturday evenings, declared himself a Home Ruler, acquired a brogue, and spared no pains to make St. Peter's Church attractive to God's poor; but his efforts were not successful.

Catholic society was much interested in Sir Ralph Aylmer de Vancelour, Baronet, Monsignor's nephew, and the fact was not surprising, for the man possessed nearly a million pounds sterling. This vast sum had been bequeathed to him by his mother, a Bourbon Princess, who had amassed it chiefly in building speculations in Paris in the days of the Second Empire. She had tied her son to her apron strings, and he was inconsolable at her loss, spending the greater part of his time in wandering in the Park and in playing with Blackie, a French poodle dog. Monsignor had tried in vain to rouse him and had then handed him over to Father Macdonald, who became his spiritual counsellor and intimate friend.

Monsignor's protégé was Ernest de Keramur, a young musician, who lived with his crippled mother in a small flat in the neighbourhood of St. Peter's Church. Ernest was the member of an ancient and distinguished Breton family, but he had no money other than what he earned by his profession, and his mother's income was barely three hundred a year. He was a dreamy, romantic-looking youth of three-and-twenty, quite unsophisticated, astonishingly ignorant of the world. Some years ago he had been promised the post of organist of St. Peter's when he had finished his musical education, and he thrilled at the thought of the power wielded by the man who held that appointment. The enchantress—a noble lady, in his anticipation, graceful, gracious, incomparably lovely—was to appear at St. Peter's and be wrought upon by his organ music. He

was to meet her often there after he had filled the place with sound, and stirred and excited her emotions.. He was to woo and win her in the presence of God.

CHAPTER II

A Scene in St. Peter's Catholic Church, Belgravia

One afternoon in early spring Monsignor Vancelour was engaged with his correspondence, but seemed unable to fix his thoughts upon his work. He would rise to his feet in the middle of a sentence, open the door and stand with head inclined in the act of listening; or, putting his pen aside, quit the room, pass from the presbytery into the sacristy and thence into the church, make his obeisance to the altar, and then turn his back upon it and look towards the West-end gallery, whence there came at irregular intervals sounds of a curiously varied character, some pleasant, some discordant, some quaint, some calculated to inspire terror.

At six o'clock he met his assistant priests at tea, and told them that the new organ was completed.

Father Macdonald groaned. "Terrible machine! Terrible machine!" he ejaculated.

"Read this," said Monsignor, handing him a letter, "and then pass it on to Jones."

Father Macdonald read the missive with a grim smile.

"Have you been discussing the organ with his Eminence?" asked Monsignor.

"No," replied Macdonald. "I have never alluded to it either to him or to anyone else. I dare not. Ah, there it is again!" and he screwed up his features into an expression of agony as the vibration from a pedal-pipe reached him.

"His Eminence knows very little about music," observed Father Jones, who was reading the Cardinal's missive. "Why, he refers to the new organ!" he exclaimed the next minute. "Too noisy! Too large for the church!"

"It *is* too large for the church," Monsignor admitted with a smile. "My artistic conscience—You don't like the phrase, Macdonald?—my conscience, then, tells me so. *Mea culpa. Mea maxima culpa!*"

At this point Macdonald rose to his feet, opened the door, and then started back as though he had been struck.

"*Great.* Reeds, eight and sixteen feet," explained Monsignor.

"What an appalling noise!" cried Macdonald, shutting the door. "The powers of darkness must have been let loose in the church!"

"Would you banish sound from the house of God?" asked Monsignor. "Yes, and colour, too, I believe, and worship in a barn."

"I would," replied the Scotchman. "But I submit! I submit!"

Thereupon the priests, having finished their tea, quitted the room, Monsignor returning to his own apartment.

He was disturbed by the Cardinal's letter, which was carping and disagreeable in tone. He had shown it to his assistant priests because it proved that the writer was not qualified to express an opinion upon the subject of music; but now that he was alone, Monsignor dwelt upon the more important fact disclosed by the letter, namely, that the Cardinal's unfriendly attitude towards him was unchanged. This was a matter of grief to the rector, for though, in common with so many of the members of the old Catholic families, he disliked Cardinal Grimsby, the feeling did not blind him to the great qualities of the famous churchman. He was, moreover, aware of his own limitations, and tried to see himself from the standpoint of the ascetic prelate. "Feather-bed monk! Feather-bed monk!" he muttered and winced; but suddenly a vast triad filled the air with sound and drove all troublesome thoughts from his mind; his handsome face lit up with joy; and taking his berretta he quitted the room, descended the stair, and entered the sacristy, where he was accosted by a man carrying a bag of tools.

"We've left the gas alight and the console open," said the man. "The young gentleman was to be here at about this time to try the organ. There's nothing more to be done, sir; we've gone over the reeds for the last time."

Monsignor nodded, and passed into the church. Evening was drawing on, and except for the little red altar lamp the sanctuary was in darkness; two or three of the gas brackets were alight in the aisles and

there was light in the organ-gallery, but the greater portion of the building was in obscurity.

Monsignor looked towards the sanctuary, and his eyes traced the outline of the reredos and descended to the tabernacle, upon which they rested while he muttered a short prayer. He then drew near to a spot whence a picture representing the Condemnation of the Saviour could be seen, gazed up at it with love and pity in his large blue eyes, and said the prayers selected for the First Station in the popular Roman Catholic devotion, the Way of the Cross. He then proceeded on his journey, halting at each of the Stations, recalling the scenes they represented, and repeating the prescribed prayers.

He was thus engaged when a lady entered the church and stood for a couple of minutes close to the last bench of the nave, taking in the scene. She was a tall, finely built girl of three- or four-and-twenty, very dark, extremely handsome. Her eyes were magnificent, deep set, heavy lidded, and with long curved lashes; her eyebrows were straight and thick, and there was a suspicion of down upon her upper lip. She had large regular features, a high, broad forehead, a prominent aquiline nose with sensitive nostrils, and a massive chin. But though her beauty was of a bold and commanding type and her carriage stately, the expression in her eyes was soft and sad. Her toilette, which was very fashionable but sombre in colour, helped the impression she conveyed of a lady in high place and with a proud and masterful spirit, who had passed through a tragical experience.

Having taken a general survey of the building she walked slowly up the nave and, halting close to the sanctuary steps, gazed towards the tabernacle with a wistful yearning expression. She then turned her back to the altar and with half-closed eyes watched Monsignor, who, with head bent and his berretta held against his breast, was moving from one Station to another. He was far distant from her and presumably she wished to obtain a clearer view of him, for she entered the aisle, walked along the passage above which the pictures representing the stages of Christ's last journey were suspended, and coming to a standstill half-way down the aisle continued her examination of the priest.

Meanwhile the rustle of her garments had attracted the attention of a young man of romantic appearance, who was kneeling in a chapel that opened out from the aisle close to the spot where she had halted. The chapel was in darkness, but she stood in light, and her handsome face and figure were visible to the young man, who rose slowly to his feet and gazed at her with love and admiration in his eyes. He was the organist, Ernest de Keramur, and he had come to the church to play for the first time upon the new organ, to "show off" the instrument to Monsignor Vancelour. For months, years, he had looked forward to this day, this hour, when he was to demonstrate his mastery of his art to Monsignor and receive at his hands the much coveted appointment. Reared in the atmosphere of religion he had been invoking God to aid him in his performance when the rustle of the

lady's dress caught his ear. Her beauty enraptured him; he loved her the moment he beheld her; she was the lady of his dreams made flesh; and as he had anticipated she had first appeared to him in St. Peter's Church.

When she had left his vision Ernest quitted the chapel, and observed her cross the nave and draw near to Monsignor, with the purpose, it would seem, of accosting him; but at a few yards' distance from the priest she held back, apparently not liking to interrupt him in his devotions. Her movements did not surprise the young Breton; the scene was as he had preconceived it: the lady was dissatisfied with "the world" and had come to seek counsel of a priest of God; it was his own part to charge the atmosphere with sound, to stir her emotions, to thrill her by his organ music. Accordingly, he quitted the aisle, stepped quietly down the nave, and two minutes later was gazing at the console of the organ. Again he beheld the hand of God. The gallery was lit up, the console was open, the engine supplying wind to the organ was at work, some of the stops even were drawn. A gentle, regular, pulsating sound was in the gallery; the organ seemed to be breathing, to be welcoming Ernest, surrendering itself to him with all its notes of joy and sorrow and sympathy and triumph; and he looked upon it as the bridegroom looks upon his bride, with pride and happiness and an expression of respectful mastery.

Monsignor had reached the Twelfth Station and was contemplating the Death of Christ upon the Cross,

when he heard the rustle of a dress, turned, and beheld the lady. He had been absorbed in his devotions, and her sudden appearance caused him to make a slight start, upon which she dropped her eyes in confusion and came to a standstill. He looked surprised, then a trifle irritated, then he turned with a slow uncertain movement and resumed his devotions. When he had finished them and made his obeisance to the altar, the lady came forward and said: "I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Father. I want to know if you will kindly allow me to consult with you."

Monsignor bowed. "Certainly," said he; and then after a short pause, "Are you a Catholic?" he asked.

"No."

"You are thinking of becoming one?"

"I do not know. I cannot make up my mind."

Monsignor threw a searching glance at her, and the light of recognition appeared in his eyes.

"Yes," said she, on observing his expression, "we have met before—once or twice—years ago. You came to us at Tanworth. My father was alive then," she added in a sad tone.

"I remember," said the priest. "You are Lady Eva Fitzgower."

Further speech was arrested by a deep pedal note, an emanation from the abysses of sound. Involuntarily the eyes of the lady met those of her companion and remained fixed upon them while she and the priest awaited the "broad and massive" chord that they felt must inevitably arise upon that profound

pedal note. They smiled on hearing it, and then stood for several minutes, facing each other, without uttering a word, while Ernest extemporised upon the organ.

There was much resonance in the church, and that and the dim light heightened the effect of the music, which in itself was not remarkable. A clever organist was extemporising upon a fine organ, that was all; but his performance cast a spell upon the hearers. They stood rigid with dreamy, half-closed eyes while the tones of the diapasons rolled and reverberated in the building, and when the organist drew the reed stops on the *swell* and began adding register to register a look of excitement became visible upon their countenances. The mighty rush of sound thrilled their nerves. The long-drawn-out *crescendo* suggested the approach of a tempest. The benches shook, the candlesticks rattled, the ground trembled under their feet. "Splendid! splendid!" muttered the lady, whereupon Monsignor started and awoke as from a dream. He was a little ashamed of his nervous exaltation, and his thoughts flew back to the Cardinal who scorned him as a lover of sensation. Thenceforth he took no pleasure in the music and observed with growing irritation its effect upon the lady. He saw the radiant smile upon her face, the look of exquisite enjoyment in her eyes, and he perceived that the emotion she displayed was not of the kind that should be experienced in a church. The Cardinal was right, he admitted it: the organ was too large, too strenuous, too stirring; it excited and enthralled the hearer instead of appealing to his religious feelings.

When Ernest had brought his performance to an end, Lady Eva exclaimed: "What a magnificent organ! Ah, now I'm in the mood to join the Roman Church!"

Perhaps she thought, she may even have hoped, that Monsignor would hasten to take advantage of her mood; but he did not do so. "The organ is too large," said he coldly, "too sensational an instrument."

"Well, but so much the better," said she. "I mean I like that overwhelming, overpowering sound. The music in the Roman churches is so impressive, and in this church it is more impressive than in any other. I often come to hear it."

"I hope that you don't come here only to hear the music?"

"Oh, no; the ceremonies also impress me, and the church itself is so devotional."

"The accessories of Catholic worship attract you?"

"Oh, so so much! I mean at St. Peter's. At other Catholic churches in London and in the churches abroad I am often repelled by what I see. At St. Peter's Romanism is adapted to suit the tastes of English people."

"Anglo-Gallicanism!" inwardly exclaimed the priest, and again the figure of the Cardinal arose before his mental vision, for Grimsby had accused him of fostering the spirit of Anglo-Gallicanism (namely, the principle or tendency of those who wished to reduce the papal authority over English Roman Catholics and to be "as national as possible" without

quitting the Roman fold) among the Catholic aristocracy.

"You are mistaken," said the priest. "Except in trifling details the services at St. Peter's do not differ from the services in other Catholic churches."

She did not pursue the subject. "I am hoping that the organist will play again," she said. "By the by, would you let me see the organ? I should like so much to see it."

Monsignor was a little surprised at the request, but he acceded to it, motioned her to follow him, and walked towards the West-end gallery.

Ernest de Keramur was standing close to the console of the organ when Monsignor and the lady appeared. The priest came forward and congratulated him upon his performance; then indicating his companion, "This lady wishes to see the organ," he said, and he mentioned the names of the young man and the young woman, M. de Keramur, Lady Eva Fitzgower. Ernest bowed and invited her to approach the console of the instrument; then resumed his seat and launched out into a description of the stops, manuals, and mechanical contrivances. She listened with a show of interest, but she was observing the organist not the organ, as Ernest perceived when he glanced up at her after emphasising a point in his description. She had decided that he was interesting looking, that he was a genius, and the idea was expressed in her beautiful eyes when the young man caught them unawares. She coloured slightly and smiled, and Ernest, turning again to the organ, made

some effective combinations of registers, and asked her her opinion of them. Then he persuaded her to try the organ herself, and they changed positions, she taking his place upon the organ seat and he hers close to the console.

"You must teach me," said she, after playing a few chords upon the instrument. "Will you? Do you think Monsignor would allow you to teach me upon this organ? And I wish that you would always play when I am in the church; it makes me feel so devotional. You might tell me when you practise and I might arrange to be here at the time. I should like it to be at an hour when there's a dim religious light in the church."

Monsignor was observing them with a troubled smile; he could hear Cardinal Grimsby saying, "What business has that woman here?" and he himself had misgivings in regard to the lady whose behaviour, it must be admitted, was a little cool. "Difficult case!" he thought. "Difficult case!" and then, "My young friend bears himself well." This had reference to Ernest, who was smiling and chatting with the lady as though he had known her for years.

"But we must ask Monsignor," said she, raising her voice; and then turning to the priest: "I hope that what I have suggested will not interfere with the services of the church."

"I am afraid that we could not postpone the services," said he with mock gravity.

At that the blood rushed to her face. "Of course not," said she softly.

"If you attended the services you would hear M. de Keramur play," suggested the priest.

"True," said she doubtfully.

"You would not object to others being present?" And then after glancing at his watch: "They will be shutting up the church in a few minutes."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said she. "I had forgotten about the time. It was so good of you to have played," she added to the organist. "I enjoyed your playing so much!"

"Kindly allow me," said Ernest, and she gave him her hand, and he helped her to her feet.

"Good-bye!" said she, nodding to him. "Don't forget that you have promised to teach me the organ," and gathering her skirts she turned to the priest, and in a glance graciously gave him her permission to precede her down the stair. He did so, and when they had made the descent she exclaimed: "Ah! how solemn the church looks. Perfect! Perfect!"

"But surely the place should have been fitted with arm-chairs instead of with hard benches?" said Monsignor with a smile. "And wouldn't a few coloured lights increase the effect?"

She was not in the habit of being snubbed, and it took her some little time to grasp the significance of his words. Then, "I am so sorry that I have not been —been correct," said she slowly and blushing a deep red. "But I am not a Romanist and—and——"

"We must not come to God's house merely to seek agreeable sensations; that is all I meant to imply,"

said he; and then after a short pause, "You wish to consult with me?"

Yes," she answered hesitatingly, for she was a little hurt. "Yes. Would seven in the evening suit you?"

"Yes, quite well."

"Not to-morrow. Thursday — Thursday next week."

That day and hour were agreed upon for the interview, and the next moment the priest bowed and quitted her, without accompanying her to the door of the church. She felt the slight, if indeed it should be called that, and watched the retreating figure of the priest with reproachful eyes; then turned, quitted the building, and stood under the porch peering into the darkness for her carriage. Not seeing it, she left the porch and had proceeded a few yards on her way when the door of the presbytery opened and Ernest appeared. To her surprise he came forward and addressed her. "I intended to ask you a favour and I trust that you will forgive me," said he. "I should be so grateful if you would come to the church for the Mass next Sunday. It will be the first service that I shall play at St. Peter's and I am very anxious that it shall go well. May I walk with you?"

This was a bold request. Lady Eva very rarely walked in London streets unattended by her maid, even in the daytime, and it was now dark. But no one was about, and the person who played the organ was interesting, a genius, and she was rather curious to hear what he had to say to her. "I can quite understand your anxiety," said she, resuming her walk.

"And you will be present at the Mass?"

"Er—well, I must see what my plans are for Sunday."

"It will help me if I know that you are present."

"Yes?" said she, arching her brows. "How? Why?"

"Your presence helped me this evening. I never played so well before. I knew that you and Monsignor were listening, and that inspired me. Grand, wasn't it, when I brought on the full power of the organ!"

She turned and glanced at the strange young man. "Well, yes, it was grand," said she, smiling.

"And you will come on Sunday?" he persisted.

"Yes, if I have no engagement for that morning."

"Thank you. And if it is convenient I should like to see you after the Mass and discuss the service with you. I intend to obtain a complete control over the choir and to make the music at St. Peter's the best in London. But I should like you to help me by your criticism. Monsignor has technical knowledge, but he has to take part in the services and to preach, and that will divert his attention from the music. I shall be in the organ-gallery and it will be difficult for me to judge the effect that I and my choir are producing; you will be in the church and in a better position to judge it. As my pupil you will soon gain an acquaintance with the organ and I shall make known to you the composition of the choir."

"Now what am I to say?" thought Lady Eva, suppressing an inclination to laugh. The young man

betrayed a strange ignorance or disregard of the conventions; that he should be walking by her side on a dark evening in the fashionable quarter of London was a surprising circumstance enough, and here was he proposing a scheme that would bring them together on a footing of intimacy! But she felt no inclination to snub him; she had been struck by his name, which she knew to be that of a distinguished Breton family, by his romantic appearance, by the ease and grace with which he had received her in the organ-gallery. "But I am not a Catholic and not a member of the congregation of St. Peter's," said she.

"But you are going to join the Church," said he, as though he took the fact for granted.

"I do not know that I am. I have not made up my mind."

They had entered a square, in an angle of which stood a huge brick mansion with stone quoins and keystones over the windows. In the centre of the front a bow-window projected, and from either side of this a colonnade reached to the angle of the house. Between the semicircular drive, which enclosed a railed-off space planted with evergreens, the garden of the square, ran the public road. Upon the stone gate-posts at either end of the drive the words "Newark House" were written. This was Lady Eva's destination, and she stopped, offered Ernest her hand with a friendly smile, and said, "I hope that you will be successful on Sunday."

CHAPTER III

A Scene in Newark House, Belgravia

Newark House contained several fine rooms. A square apartment, lighted from the top by a glass dome and with a gallery round it supported by Ionic columns of scagliola, formed a sort of vestibule to the dining-room. This was built in the reign of George II, and was more Renaissance in character: a very large apartment, sixty feet by forty, with a semi-circular bow containing three French windows that looked out upon the square. The ceiling was coved, of heavy plaster work, and adorned with wreaths of foliage; pilasters of Brescia marble divided the walls into square panels, in the centre of which were pictures by an Italian painter of the school of Correggio, carved woodwork in the beautiful style of Grinling Gibbons surrounding the pictures. The furniture was of a much later date, that of George IV's reign, not elegant of course but magnificent in its way, the huge pieces of mahogany, the sideboards with their "sarcophagus" wine-coolers, giving an impression of solidity and genuineness, qualities we like to associate with our countrymen.

Half an hour after Lady Eva had entered the house this room presented a very sumptuous appearance. There was a lavish, almost an ostentatious, display of

plate upon the table. In the centre stood a column of silver-gilt with four basket-like projections filled with flowers and four oblong trays connected with the column by pedestals supporting crouching lions. These trays had floors of burnished silver and edges made to represent classical parapets with nymphs standing upon the podia at the angles; they were intended to convey the impression of four canals running from the central column. This wonderful piece, or rather these combined pieces, of plate had belonged to Napoleon the Great. There were other fine examples of First Empire plate upon the table, and a profusion of glass, fruit, and flowers.

All this glittering display would seem to have been for the benefit of only three diners, for two servants in livery were engaged in removing three dessert-plates and finger-bowls. When they had done this, the men took two of the chairs away from the table, leaving the third in its position at the head, and laid a cover for a single diner. A minute or two later the butler entered and looked about him with a critical eye, and then all three servants stood in an attitude of expectation.

At about half-past nine o'clock the rustle of garments announced the approach of a lady, and Eva Fitzgower appeared, wearing a black velvet dress that left her finely moulded arms and neck bare. Thereupon the room with its massive furniture and richly decked table seemed to lose its ostentatious character and to form an appropriate surrounding for this stately lady.

When she was about half-way through her dinner Eva sent for her companion, Miss Norris, who presently appeared and conversed with her upon the subject of a baby boy in trouble with his teeth, both ladies showing much concern. Then silence followed till the servants had retired, when Miss Norris asked with hesitation: "Do you know that Lady Newark has made the acquaintance of Sir Ralph Vancelour?"

"No. How? When? Where?" asked the other with surprise.

"Mr. Mortimer presented him to her at the bazaar last week. You remember that you gave her ladyship permission to go to it."

"Not *permission*, my little Norris," smiled Eva (as a matter of fact Miss Norris was rather a large woman). "My little sister requires no one's permission to go where she pleases. Well?"

"Lady Newark invited him to call here and he did so. You were out. Lady Braintree was present."

"But how is it that I have not heard of this before?"

"We intended to tell you——"

"Naturally!"

"But—well—the fact is——" Miss Norris hesitated.

"Do you mean that my little sister—that Lady Newark asked you to keep the matter a secret from me?"

Miss Norris signified that that was the case, upon which Eva coloured and looked annoyed.

"Lady Braintree and I were in a difficulty," pur-

sued Miss Norris. "Of course we—or rather I didn't promise Lady Newark——"

"Yes, yes, I understand that," interrupted Eva, who found her companion's obsequious tone a little jarring. "You said that you were not present when Sir Ralph Vancelour called and that Lady Braintree was. Will you kindly tell Lady Braintree that I wish to see her?"

Miss Norris rose and quitted the room, returning to it a few minutes later with Lady Braintree. The latter was an elderly widow of no means, a collateral of the Fitzgowers, a supremely uninteresting person, who acted as a chaperon to Eva and as a companion to Lady Newark. (She, Miss Norris, Eva, Lady Newark, and the child who was cutting his teeth formed the household.) In answer to Eva's inquiries Lady Braintree said that Sir Ralph Vancelour had called at Lady Newark's invitation and that the Roman Church was the subject of their discourse. The information was given reluctantly, as though the speaker were betraying a secret and disliked the task. She pleaded deafness and said that after all she may have been mistaken as to the subject discussed by the Baronet and the Marchioness; went on to say that as Sir Ralph was to call again this evening Eva would be able to find out for herself what was his business with Lady Newark; and concluded with the information that Mr. Frank Mortimer was at present with the last-named lady in the French room. An intelligent listener would have guessed three facts from the above colloquy: that Lady Eva Fitzgower was virtually the

mistress of the household, that Lady Newark, her "little sister," more accurately her sister-in-law, was the nominal mistress, and that the latter was under the surveillance of Miss Norris and Lady Braintree.

Lady Newark was a widow and the mother of the heir, who was one year old. She was the sole guardian of the child, the temporary owner of Newark House, Tanworth Castle in the Midlands, and Cottesley Park in the West of England, and the possessor of half a million of money, the whole of her husband's personalty. To judge from her conversation with Mr. Frank Mortimer, however, she was by no means satisfied with her position. The French room, in which she had received him, was a gay and charming apartment. It had been imported by one of the Lords of Newark, ambassador to the court of Louis XV, and was white and gold, rococo in style, and with panels twisted into eccentric shapes. These were filled in with Genoese velvet, and showed a pomegranate pattern of purple upon a white ground. The mantelpiece was of ormolu and supported by figures of goddesses in the same material; attached to the walls were console tables, consisting of a slab of marble upheld by a cantilever shaped like a mermaid. The room was lit by candles in a magnificent ormolu chandelier by Buhl. Lady Newark looked out of place in these surroundings. She was a woman of two-and-twenty, small, fair, rather pretty of a common type, and her black crape dress did not become her. As a rule her face lacked expression, and she was unnaturally silent, speaking only when addressed;

but at this moment she was "letting herself go," as she would have phrased it, betraying herself with a vengeance. Her companion, Mr. Frank Mortimer, or the Hon. Frank Mortimer, to give him his title, was the brother of one of the representative Catholic peers, a man of thirty, short, not handsome but neat, elegant, and extremely intelligent looking. He had held the post of secretary to the great Lord Newark, as the first Marquis, Lady Eva's father, was called by the members of the Fitzgower family, and had been a college friend and a bear leader to Lord Tanworth, the very unpromising heir, who had subsequently held the title and estates for a few months, having shortly before that taken to the altar a lady who gained her livelihood by kicking up her heels. This was the present Lady Newark. In the absence of companions congenial to her she had grown into the habit of confiding in Mortimer, who was a kind and sympathetic man. He winced, however, and looked embarrassed while she was pouring out the catalogue of her grievances, and when she stopped he asked: "But if you are unhappy under Lady Eva's régime why don't you tell her so?"

"I dare not," was the reply. "She has broken my spirit. She is not intentionally unkind; on the contrary, she intends to be and thinks she is most kind, and it is only fair to say that she relieves me of my responsibilities. To manage three establishments is a man's work, and I am sure I don't know how she copes with it. She makes things easy for me, I must admit that."

"Then why are you unhappy?" asked her companion.

"Because I am treated like a child and dare not do what I want, say what I want, or even think what I want. Because I come here, go there, do this, do that, try to think this, think that, because she expects it of me. Because I feel that her eyes are always watching me!"

"But Lady Eva's methods are not tyrannical," Mortimer protested.

"*Apparently* they are not. She tells me how a woman in my position ought to act and think; she says that she is quite certain that I shall never depart from the traditions of the family into which I have married—her own words; and—and she looks at me!"

They smiled,—Lady Newark bitterly. "I know that it sounds ridiculous," said she; "but those eyes of hers make my life a misery to me. I feel that she is always watching me and reading my thoughts, and I am afraid and ashamed, and say things that I know will please her; tell her how good she is to me and how thankful I am to her and how I love her. And all the time I wish that she was dead! I dare not protest against anything she does," went on the Marchioness. "When we go to Tanworth or Cottesley an army of servants precedes us and the big rooms are thrown open, just as they are here; but we never see anyone except a few friends of the Great Lord and the agents and the clergymen who hold the family livings. And Eva wants this sort of life to go on till

my son comes of age! She has heaps of interests and a great deal of work to get through; I haven't any interests and have nothing to do from morning till night except dress, or be dressed—Eva selects my toilettes—and sit in a big room and try to look happy and say 'Yes' and 'No.' I never write out a cheque except at her dictation; I have never engaged nor dismissed a servant. I haven't a friend in the world except you, and I can't expect you to sympathise with me. I feel crushed, as though I can't breathe! All day long and half the night I weave plots against Eva in my mind and long that all sorts of cruel things will happen to her. I have often thought of appealing to the other members of the family, but I don't like to do so after their behaviour when poor Tanworth died. Little Newark had only just been born and I was in agony, and they tried to make out that I wasn't married at all, and then that Tanworth was out of his mind. Then Eva quarrelled with them, and has never seen them since, and came and nursed me and Newark. No; I couldn't appeal to them against her after that, and yet I wish that they would force themselves upon me, for I would sooner be with anyone in the world than with Eva!"

This long plaint was uttered in a broken voice and with many interruptions. Mortimer tried to feel sympathy for the speaker, but he knew that Lady Eva was actuated by good motives in controlling her sister-in-law and he approved her methods. The Marchioness was bound to fall under the dominion of a stronger mind; if Eva's yoke were cast off some

one else's would inevitably be substituted for it. Accordingly Mortimer thought that the widow had better strive to be contented with her position, an enviable one enough in many respects though it had its drawbacks, and told her so, speaking in a soothing voice and uttering a few platitudes that had the effect of irritating her.

"Then you think I ought to go on submitting to Eva?" she asked, showing her little white teeth.

"Yes," said he, whereupon she rose from her chair, and, looking at him doubtfully, said: "I am wondering whether I shall tell you about my little plot."

"No, no, please don't, please don't, Lady Newark!" he implored. "Really I must be going"; and he rose from his seat.

"Your friend, Sir Ralph Vancelour, will be here in a minute or two," said she.

"Sir Ralph Vancelour!" exclaimed Mortimer, resuming his seat. "But—but Lady Eva has not met him."

The words were unfortunate, and the lady was sharp enough to detect their implication. "*I* have met him," said she; "but I suppose that I have not the right to ask anyone to my own house!"

"Oh, pardon me, Lady Newark; but there really is an understanding between you and Lady Eva that——"

"Go on, go on," said she vulgarly, "make matters worse! It was you who presented Sir Ralph to me, so you're partly responsible for what I am going to do. Now in my plot——"

"No, no, no, there's no plot, and things are all right, and really I must be going."

"The fact of the matter is that you're afraid of Eva. But whether you like it or not you'll be forced to support me if you're a sincere Catholic."

"Sincere Catholic?"

"Sit down and I'll tell you all about it. . . . Now when you presented Sir Ralph Vancelour to me at that bazaar I asked him to call here, at a time when I knew Eva would be away from home, and he did so. But he was so stupid and I was so much afraid that Eva would break in upon us, that I didn't know what to say to him; and he was beginning to look frightened when in sheer desperation I asked him about his uncle, Monsignor Vancelour, whom Eva's always talking about. To please him I said that I admired the Romish Church, and ran on about the subject without thinking of what I was saying, till he seemed to gather the impression that I wished to become a Romanist myself. I allowed him to remain under the impression—why, I don't know—probably because it was my easiest course; but since then I have been thinking that it would be a good move on my part to become a Romanist, at all events for a time. You see Eva herself is—how did you put it?—coquetting?—yes, coquetting with Rome, so that she could not blame me for following her example. Then if I become a Romanist the news of my change of creed will reach the other members of the family—Lady Caterham, the Bishop, Colonel Fitzgower—and they will insist upon seeing me in spite of Eva. Then I shall

tell them that she was responsible for my change of creed, and then perhaps I shall escape from her yoke —to fall under that of some other member of the family, no doubt, but there cannot be such another tyrant in the world as Eva! I shall then allow myself to be converted back again to the English church. But if the news of my change of creed falls flat, I shall remain a Romanist, and prompt my father confessor to advise me to do the things I want to do, so that when Eva objects or looks at me with those horrible eyes of hers I shall say, 'But, my dear Eva, I must obey my father confessor, who doesn't think it good that I should lead so solitary a life,' and so forth and so forth. You see if he backs me up, as of course he will, I shall be able to look Eva in the face when I'm disregarding her wishes!"

"Well, of all the perverse ingenuity——!" Mortimer began, when the door was opened and Sir Ralph Vancelour announced.

The Baronet was a tall, awkward, unprepossessing looking man of six-and-twenty, ignorant and narrow-minded, but simple, honourable, and profoundly religious. His ungainly figure was clad in a shabby evening suit, and his face looked unwashed, but that may have been the effect of his cadaverous complexion.

Mortimer observed that Lady Newark directed a look of appeal at the newcomer while shaking hands with him, and that Sir Ralph nodded reassuringly in return. The young men were in the same circle and distantly connected, but they were not very friendly;

they exchanged a curt nod of recognition; and the trio were about to seat themselves when the door was again opened and Eva and Lady Braintree appeared. The girl entered the room with a slow and stately step, and, making her way towards her "little sister," glanced down upon her with a smile and inquired after her health. There was an air of protectorship, almost of proprietorship, about her manner; it was as though she were addressing a sick child who had been placed under her charge; and one could imagine that if the occasion had been an ordinary one and the young men not present, the Marchioness would have put up her face to be kissed, fondled her sister-in-law's arm, or indulged in some kittenish form of caress. But the widow had a part to play this evening, and she avoided the girl's eye, and tried to look very serious, but really looked what she felt, very guilty, a revolter against authority. However, Eva turned aside apparently without noticing that there was anything amiss with her, and gave her hand to Mortimer, looking at him frankly with her beautiful eyes. She then stood close to Sir Ralph, in order to give the Marchioness an opportunity of presenting that stranger to her; but Lady Newark hesitated, her fear of Eva having revived, and it was Mortimer who presented the Baronet. "The nephew of Monsignor Vancelour," he explained.

Sir Ralph stared at Eva, but not with admiring eyes. "I have seen you," said he, as though she were going to dispute the fact, "at St. Peter's Church."

"Yes? I have often been there," she returned.

"Indeed, I was there to-day; and," she added, addressing the company, "I had an artistic treat. There was a young person, an organist, in the church, and he had come to play for the first time——"

"So they've finished that organ, have they?" interrupted Sir Ralph brusquely.

Eva turned and looked at the uncouth creature, but he was not abashed by her glance. "I am with Father Macdonald," said he, "and we make no pretence of liking that organ."

"In that case it would scarcely do for me to praise it," said she.

"Oh, I don't want to force my opinion upon anybody," said the Baronet, and his tone was so unpleasant, though apparently he did not mean it to be so, that Eva lifted her shoulders and was silent.

"And of course my uncle knows a great deal more about music than Father Macdonald or I do," went on the Baronet. "You liked the organ?"

"I thought it magnificent," said she, "and it was magnificently played by M. de Keramur."

"We have great faith in M. de Keramur," put in Mortimer, "and he has great faith in himself. I know him a little, though I doubt that he would allow me to claim him as an acquaintance. He is a mightily exclusive person."

Eva smiled. "Is he?" she asked, and then: "He was very kind to me," she observed characteristically.

The Baronet's eye was upon Lady Newark, who chose a moment when the attention of the others was engaged for shaking her head. How could she allude

to her religious inclinations in general company? And yet she felt more courage in the presence of the two Catholic gentlemen than she felt when she was alone with Eva. She would never dare to hint at the idea of changing her creed to Eva privately, and it was not likely she would have a more favourable opportunity of introducing the subject than was presented to her at this moment. Eva herself had just referred to her visit to St. Peter's Church, and the conversation might easily be brought to a point at which the Marchioness could, without irrelevance or a noticeable departure from conventional speech, throw in a remark as to her own religious inclinations, and thus prepare her sister-in-law for the announcement of her contemplated change of creed. But a sense of guilt held her tongue, and she abandoned all hope of carrying out her project.

But the Baronet had come to the house with a purpose, and he intended to fulfil it. The Marchioness wished to join the Church, but dared not do so "because of the family," and chiefly, as she had given him to understand, "because of Lady Eva Fitzgower"; and he had come to do battle with the girl on behalf of the persecuted widow. All this was plain to Mortimer, who dreaded a scene, and who was carrying on a perfunctory conversation with Eva upon the subject of music. And Eva herself was conscious that there was something in the air and that the Baronet's visit was connected with it, but she was unwilling to ask for an explanation while that stranger was present. "Keep up my music?" she was saying

to Mortimer, when Sir Ralph, who had the manners of a boor, interposed: "Did you see my uncle when you were at the church?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Perhaps you would like to know him?" said the Baronet, turning to Lady Newark.

"Yes," said she with a little burst of courage. "My sister has often spoken about him. You might bring him here."

At that Eva broke off her conversation with Mortimer, and glancing at the widow—one of the glances that the Marchioness dreaded—said: "Catholic priests call only upon the members of their own flock."

"You are mistaken," said Sir Ralph. "Besides which, Lady Newark wishes to join us."

"I don't understand you," said Eva, and turning away from him she looked inquiringly at the Marchioness.

"Like yourself I feel the attraction of Romanism, that is all," said the latter in a feeble tone.

Eva's astonishment was such that she lost control of her tongue. "You have no religious convictions of any kind, my dear," said she.

"You have no right to assume that," said the Baronet sharply.

The girl started at this piece of insolence and glared at the speaker, but she said nothing; and then she and Mortimer, who was experiencing a creepy feeling down his spine, and Lady Braintree were the witnesses of a strange ceremony.

"Pardon me," said the Baronet, and rising to his feet he turned his back upon the company and bowed his head. Then he faced the Marchioness, holding in his hand a silver cross. "It belonged to my dear mother," said he in a solemn tone. "God rest her soul! The chasing is the work of St. Ladislaus, one of the last of the martyrs. You see this dent," said he, showing it her. "He made it with his fingers in a moment of great agony when he was being tortured. The cross was laid upon the breast of the Empress Maria-Hilda when she was dying." Thereupon he submitted the relic to Lady Newark, who imitated his action and kissed it. "Pardon me, Lady Eva," said he; "but you are not in the disposition to join the Church; Lady Newark is, and that is why I have allowed her to kiss the cross." Then turning again to the Marchioness he addressed these words to her: "I will introduce you by letter to Father Macdonald, who will instruct you in the articles of the faith; after which you had better spend some time in retreat and prepare yourself for a general confession. Father Macdonald will do everything in his power for you, as indeed he would for anyone who approaches him in the right disposition."

It was scarcely correct to say that Mortimer and Lady Braintree were witnesses of this ceremony, for the former's eyes were upon the ground and the latter's upon the tip of her nose while it was in progress. Eva would seem to have been more struck by the faith and courage of the Baronet than by his unconventionality and strange sense of what was becom-

ing in a drawing-room, for she watched him with some curiosity and with some admiration. But when he had finished speaking a look of determination came to her face, and her final salute of him was frigidly polite.

As he quitted the room Sir Ralph motioned Mortimer to follow him; but Eva came forward and said: "I wish to speak with you, Mr. Mortimer. Will you kindly wait in the morning-room?" and he descended the stair in the wake of the Baronet, and entered an apartment that opened out from the hall as the street door was shut upon Sir Ralph.

Mortimer was kept waiting twenty minutes or half-an-hour, and his reflections were bitter. "I shall be blamed for this," he thought, and then asked himself for the hundredth time why he continued to dance attendance upon the members of the Fitzgower family. He was upon a footing of intimacy with them all, with Eva and the Marchioness who represented the one faction, and with Lady Caterham, Eva's aunt, the Bishop of Winton, and Colonel the Hon. Percy Fitzgower, her uncles, and Alec, her cousin, who represented the other faction. All these persons treated him as one of themselves. The ladies discussed their intimate affairs in his presence and sometimes asked his advice thereupon; they likewise sent him upon errands, asked him to perform odd jobs, and gave him commissions to execute, some of which entailed a great loss of time and not a few of which entailed even a loss of money. Moreover, they allowed themselves a freedom and a frankness when address-

ing him that they would never have employed towards a professional man or even to a servant. If they were in a good humour they were exceedingly pleasant to him; if in a bad humour they vented it upon him. The disadvantages of his position in regard to the Fitzgowers outweighed the advantages; but he loved Eva, though in a quite hopeless fashion, and had not the strength of mind to keep away from her.

At length the girl appeared, her face flushed, her brows drawn. "I do not think it kind of you to have brought Sir Ralph Vancelour here," said she in a restrained voice. "You know my wishes about my little sister, and how careful I have always been to shield her from—from bad influences."

"But I didn't bring him here," Mortimer protested. "Lady Newark invited him."

"He's not a gentleman."

"He's a boor."

"He has been discussing religion with her and trying to unsettle her mind. I could not have believed such a thing possible. Such cowardly conduct! She's terribly distressed and keeps on saying that she must obey the voice of her conscience."

"Well, but that's true, isn't it?" asked Mortimer with a queer smile.

"I don't understand you. What do you mean? Oh yes, yes, I see. But my little sister has no religious convictions, and the idea that she should change her creed is preposterous, out of the question! Of course you realise that?"

"No, I don't realise it. You forget that I myself am a Catholic."

She eyed him contemptuously, and her tongue ran away with her. "You—yes, of course, your family is Catholic. You—you are a Neo-Catholic, I have heard you say: a fearful sort of wild fowl!" But she blushed to the forehead after uttering these words. "I beg your pardon," said she. "I am so much distressed and did not think what I was saying. I hope that you will forgive me. Ah, you will? You are always so kind." With that she took an easy-chair and motioned him to a seat.

The hour was late, the light dim. He was alone with the beautiful girl; but his knowledge that she would not have granted a *tête-à-tête* in such conditions to any other young man failed to yield him much gratification. She had known him since her childhood and was in the habit of discussing herself with him, relating her mental history with extraordinary frankness; but he was not at liberty to employ the slightest accent of familiarity, nor even, he felt, to observe her beauty, her glowing charms: the restraint imposed upon him was indeed greater than that imposed upon young men who meet young women in ordinary conditions. And at times he was disposed to judge her from a strictly conventional standpoint, to blame her for allowing herself so much liberty, the while condemning himself for a despicable prig. It was impossible for him not to feel the glamour of her presence; when she entered the room she charged it with thrilling influences for him; and that she on her

side should feel so safe and be at such ease in his company was not altogether gratifying to Mr. Mortimer. He was in the unfortunate position of a man who loves a woman and is liked very much in return, but who knows that if he declared himself he would forfeit her friendship and make her unhappy.

As he had expected, she gave him an account of her visit to St. Peter's and her meeting with Monsignor; and then went on to speak of the Roman Church, which now attracted and anon repelled her. "Rome fascinates me," said she, "and has got a firm hold upon my mind. I cannot shake it off. I wish I could."

"You feel the magnetic influence of Rome?"

"Yes; that exactly describes it. But Rome demands so much—too much—much too much!"

"And you are not inclined to submit?"

"I do not know. At times—yes; at other times—no. If I become a Catholic I shall probably take the veil. There is more happiness in the convent than in the world."

At that Mortimer smiled.

"It is very inconsistent of me," she went on; "but I think that if I were an autocratic sovereign I should persecute the Roman Church; as it is I feel that if I don't become a Catholic, which is more than likely, I shall become very hostile to Rome."

Mortimer was amused. "I hope," said he, "that you will never be found among the enemies of Rome, the Mother of Saints."

"I am not sure. Perhaps I shall."

"You will have a powerful antagonist."

"Ah, yes."

"Pardon me, Lady Eva, but I think that you will be worsted in the struggle."

"What do you mean?"

"That Rome will get the better of you. You have tried to thrust the idea altogether from your mind?"

"Yes and failed."

"Then submit at once. In the long run Rome will force you to submit, and on harsher terms than at present. She will make you eat humble-pie and acknowledge your wicked obstinacy in resisting her."

"But I can go on resisting her."

"Then she will be revenged upon you. You will lose your faith in the process."

"I am not sure that I have much faith—any faith."

"Ah, but you crave for it!"

"Really, Mr. Mortimer!"

"You must pardon me. You began it."

She turned her beautiful eyes upon him and smiled. "I must ask *your* pardon for what I am going to say," said she. "It is very rude. But do you know that I feel more respect for you than I ever felt before?"

"Why?"

"Because I now believe that you are really a sincere Catholic for all your speculative theories. I believe that you are a subtle proselytiser."

"A proselytiser!" he repeated, and then forgot himself and asked, "Do you like proselytisers?"

"They're very useful persons sometimes," said

she, which was a disappointing answer. "But the mediæval methods were best."

"Pardon me."

"I mean that they *forced* the faith upon people."

"Do you want anyone to force Catholicism upon you?"

"No one could. It is not permitted in these days."

"I think I understand you," said Mortimer.

"I hope Monsignor Vancelour will. I have arranged an interview with him for Thursday in next week. I almost wish I had not done so."

"And Lady Newark?" asked Mortimer, and then regretted having changed the subject.

"Ah, my little sister!" Saying which Eva rose to her feet. "Of course you understand that Sir Ralph must not come here again," said she. "You might tell him so. Will you? You are always so kind."

After a little hesitation Mortimer undertook to do what she asked of him.

"Thank you so much!" and then she repeated the phrase that irritated him, "You are always so kind!"

She gave him her hand and he took it, allowing his eyes to linger on her; then he dropped them before her own beautiful eyes that glanced at him so frankly, so trustingly, and bade her "Good-bye!" in the most conventional manner.

CHAPTER IV

A Glimpse into the Past

The Great Lord Newark (as Eva's father was called by the members of the family) was a man universally respected. He had held the office of Viceroy of India and several Cabinet appointments, and had been raised to the marquisate; he had won favourable notice as a scholar and a man of letters; and he had achieved great popularity by his amiable character and lavish hospitalities. Soon after quitting India he had lost his wife, and his sister, Lady Caterham, a childless widow, had come to his aid, helped him to entertain his guests, and discharged the office of chaperon to Lady Eva. Presented in her seventeenth year, Eva was the reigning beauty of two seasons and one of the most brilliant girls of her time; wherever she went she was the centre of attraction, and the flattery and homage she received were enough to turn any woman's brain. She allowed herself more freedom than was usual with girls of her age and rank, and offended her aunt's strait-laced notions; but her father would not allow anyone to interfere with her, and society regarded her as a privileged person. In the meantime her brother, Lord Tanworth, had been sent down from Oxford and was leading a disreputable life in the metropolis. Such was the state of

affairs when a report that Lord Newark had seceded to Rome found its way into print and was contradicted. The next important event in the history of the family was Eva's engagement to the Duke of Oakham. He was the man of her own choice, and her father and aunt approved the match, but her brother, of all men in the world, raised objections to it on the ground of the Duke's private character. The engagement was announced, however, and in the following week Lord Newark died, suddenly and unexpectedly, from the effects of a chill caught in the hunting-field. This was a great blow to Eva, between whom and her father there had subsisted a great affection, and her sense of loss was accentuated by the fact that she was not in sympathy with the other members of her family. Her marriage was of course postponed, and for several months she lived in retirement.

Meanwhile the Fitzgowers were kept in a state of anxiety and suspense by the random courses of Tanworth, as they called him even after he had succeeded to the title and estates. They paid no attention to his vague hints against the Duke of Oakham, Eva's *fiancé*, and some six months after the death of the Great Lord Newark, Lady Caterham convened a family council, inviting her brothers, the Bishop of Winton, and Colonel the Hon. Percy Fitzgower, to her house for the purpose of discussing her niece's marriage. The young Marquis turned up unexpectedly at this assembly, and startled his relatives by bringing several charges of seduction and revolting cruelty against the Duke, and undertaking to support them

by irrefragable evidence. Three terrible weeks ensued. Eva refused to throw up her engagement. Exhortations were tried in vain; Newark threatened to shoot the Duke if he did not quit the country; but Eva stuck to her *fiancé*, in the belief that he was the victim of a slander. For the Duke protested his innocence and was apparently a man above the average; it was in the highest degree unlikely that his life was an outrage upon humanity. Nevertheless he finally acknowledged his guilt in the most tragic fashion by committing suicide, planning the act so carefully that it was publicly supposed to have been the result of an accident.

Eva received a terrific shock. She had loved the man with all her heart and believed firmly in his innocence, but proof of his guilt was forced upon her, and the tragedy almost unseated her reason. She hid herself from her fellow-creatures, for a time in the humble lodgings of a poor kinswoman, Lady Braintree, and after that in Cottesley Park, her brother's West-country seat.

She was still at Cottesley and in a state of apathy, when she received a letter from her brother, which contained three important announcements: his secret marriage with a dancing-woman, his wife's expectation of a child, and his own approaching decease from consumption. He wrote to implore Eva to receive him and his wife at Cottesley, nurse them, and shield them from the other members of the family. Eva aroused herself from her stupor, and yielded to his requests. The sick pair turned up in due course at

Cottesley, and in the three months that ensued Lord Newark grew rapidly worse. He was spared to see his child, however, and while of sound mind made his will, leaving his personalty to his wife and appointing her sole guardian of his son. Then he died and his body was removed to Tanworth Castle; the members of the family, including Eva, attended his obsequies; and the will was read. The family determined to dispute it, in spite of Eva's protests, and set on foot inquiries to ascertain whether the young Marquis had been legally married and whether he had been sane when making his will. While these investigations were in progress, Eva returned to Cottesley and found the Marchioness and her son hovering between life and death. Two weeks later the family abandoned their intention of disputing the will, and through Eva expressed their wish to make the acquaintance of the Marchioness; but Eva, who was angry with them, rejected their overtures on behalf of the sick woman. Injudicious letters were exchanged, and then all intercourse between the girl and her relatives ceased. It thus happened that Lady Newark had never even seen any of the Fitzgowers with the exception of her sister-in-law.

Such was the state of affairs a year before this narrative opened. Having taken possession of the widow and her son, so to speak, Eva proceeded to lay down a rule of life for them and herself, and to establish her authority at Newark House, Tanworth Castle, and Cottesley Park. Her methods have been described by her sister-in-law. She, Lady Newark,

and the little Marquis, with Lady Braintree and Miss Norris, lived in magnificent retirement, now in the London house, now in the country mansions, all three places being kept up in state at an enormous expense.

But the control of the Marchioness and the management of the households did not satisfy the cravings, the hungry needs of Eva's soul. A yearning, wistful expression, to which attention has already been called, had settled upon her countenance; she wanted spiritual consolation and a guide in her progress through this wilderness of a world. For reasons—inadequate enough—which she was to describe in her next interview with Monsignor Vancelour, she had practically lost her faith in the heyday of her social triumphs, and the circumstance had not troubled her at the time; but when the joy departed from her life she felt the need of religion. This want led her one day into St. Peter's Church, which stood almost within a stone's throw of Newark House; and the beautiful building, the gorgeous ritual and music, and the eloquence of Monsignor Vancelour made a deep impression upon her mind. Thenceforth her thoughts dwelt constantly upon the Roman Church. She was an aristocrat, and the history, wide dominion, autocratic rule, unflinching attitude, haughty exclusive spirit of Rome awoke her admiration. She was at the same time an emotional woman, and had loved much, suffered much,—lost all, she would have added; and she craved for the consolation Rome offers to the pierced heart. She longed for the close communion with God that Rome claims to bring about through

her sacraments; the ritual, the art, the accessories of Catholic worship impressed her; her emotions were kindled, her imagination was enchanted by that strange and wonderful system; unconsciously she was yielding to the "magnetic influence." But at length she awoke to a sense of what was happening in her, and thenceforth began to struggle against the attraction. Mortimer spoke of her as coquetting with Rome; he might almost have said that she was coquetting with Monsignor Vancelour, for of late that priest had impersonated Rome for her. She paid visits, surreptitious visits they might be called, to St. Peter's, and watched him as he said the Mass, as he walked in procession, wearing a splendid cope, holding up the monstrance while the choir sang the grandest of the Gregorian hymns, the *Pange Lingua*, and as in simple eloquence he held forth upon the astounding claims of Rome. He was a sacerdotalist and looked the part; he had the power, or the audacity to claim the power, of calling down upon the altar the Saviour of Mankind! He was armed with the spiritual might of Rome! And at times she regarded him with awe and wonder as a being lifted far above the level of ordinary humanity, and at other times as an audacious if superb impostor.

It was as though she were defying Rome to conquer her, taunting Rome in the spirit of the coquette; as though she said: "You attracted me when I was off my guard, subtly, cunningly gained an influence over me. A weaker woman would succumb to you or take refuge in flight. I shall do neither." Well, the

first of her encounters, so to call them, with Rome, as impersonated by Monsignor, has been described. It had heightened her interest, but stimulated her feeling of antagonism. She had a sense that she had been snubbed, that an attempt, and a not altogether unsuccessful attempt, had been made to wound her pride.

CHAPTER V

Ernest de Keramur

The young organist, Ernest de Keramur, had been brought up with the idea that he was an aristocrat of the purest water. He had recollections of a visit to his birthplace with his father, who had shown him the extensive domains that were till recently in the possession of his family; he also remembered a sojourn in Paris where he had been presented to some of the leading members of the Legitimatist party. He had bent his knee to his sovereign, Henri V, and been patted on the head by that noble-hearted gentleman. But these were memories of the remote past when Ernest was little more than a child. His father had died in debt, his mother's fortune had dwindled, and the Keramurs were too proud to beg of their august friends. The question whether Ernest was too proud to learn a profession had arisen in the more recent past. Monsignor Vancelour had debated it with him. Madame de Keramur would not hear of her son's becoming a professional man, but Ernest was more reasonable, though only a lad at the time. Monsignor had spoken frankly to him. "Your mother has barely enough money to live upon in comfort," said he. "Your friends in France may have influence, but you cannot count upon their using it on your behalf.

Your best course would be to learn a profession." Ernest agreed to this, and chose his profession, whereupon the priest said: "Your mother's health does not permit her to go into society, indeed she does not wish to make new friends, but I know that she would like me to introduce you to Catholics of birth and position. But I do not intend to do so, my boy. At present this means very little to you, but when you get older you will feel the need of companions. You will have to choose them from the professional class, and to consider yourself a member of that class. You will have to work very, very hard if you are to achieve success as a musician."

Since that time the mother and son had lived in retirement. Occasionally one of the old French *noblesse* called upon them; Cardinal Grimsby visited them twice a year, but Ernest formed no friendships among his fellow-musicians. Some few years before this narrative opened Monsignor Vancelour had promised him the appointment of organist of St. Peter's Church when and if it became vacant; at about the same time the youth had begun to dream, not of women, but of a woman, dark, stately, with beautiful eyes and a sad expression, not a débutante but a lady who had seen the world and grown disgusted with it and fixed her mind upon lofty ideals. He had remained faithful to this lady of his imagination, and preserved his purity, and served his God, who had implanted her image in his mind and had now led her personally to him. For the Lady Eva Fitzgower was ordained by Providence to be his bride! He knew, to be sure, that it

was not the custom of the daughters of English peers to wed organists; but heaven, circumstance, would work in his favour and help him to remove the obstacles in the way of the union, and he would be circumspect, patient, very, very patient, and never make a false step in his approach to intimacy. Madame de Keramur, to whom he confided his secret, seemed to be satisfied with his choice. He had no money, as she reminded him, and presumably the lady was rich, which was as it should be; that she was noble was also as it should be, for Madame de Keramur had never for a moment dreamt that her son would cast his eye upon a bourgeoise.

The apartment in which these confidences were exchanged was called Madame's boudoir; it was really the only sitting-room in a small flat. The furniture was of old French marqueterie, and upon the walls and ledges were religious symbols, crucifixes, pictures of the Madonna, photographs of church dignitaries and holy women with autograph signatures, and relics, some of them in handsome reliquaries. Madame de Keramur lay upon a sofa, covered up to her waist with a rug, her head propped up on pillows. She had a beautiful sad face, a quantity of silver-grey hair, and hands plump and white as those of a young girl. There was a strong resemblance between her and her son, both of whom looked what they were, aristocrats to their finger-tips, simple, narrow-minded, full of the pride of race.

On quitting his mother's room and the house, Ernest made his way to the presbytery of St. Peter's.

He intended to inform Monsignor Vancelour that he loved the Lady Eva Fitzgower, though he expected to be told that she was hopelessly beyond his reach. But his perceptions were keen if his knowledge of the world was small, and he believed that Monsignor would think none the worse of him for his aspiration, and conceivably might help him to attain the object of his desire.

He was shown into the priest's private room, and found him in consultation with his nephew, Sir Ralph.

"You know M. de Keramur?" said Monsignor, upon which the Baronet nodded, muttered "I'm off!" and rushed to the door.

"Come back, Ralph," said the priest, and then: "I wish you to take organ lessons from M. de Keramur. You have too much time on your hands. M. de Keramur's terms are fifteen guineas for twelve lessons—payable in advance."

Sir Ralph's countenance fell. "There's a piano in my place. You might come there," said he ungraciously to the organist.

Ernest flushed angrily, but Monsignor interposed. "Yes," said he, "you might go to my nephew's rooms and teach him the piano. The terms are the same as for organ lessons," he addressed the Baronet, who nodded his head and withdrew.

"You very nearly lost a valuable pupil, Keramur," said the priest sharply.

"Sir Ralph?" began Ernest.

"Sir Ralph is a rich man," interrupted the other,

"and can afford to pay you very high terms. It will do him no harm to take music lessons and it will help to fill your purse. Now that you are the organist here I shall be able to get you pupils, and pupils who will pay you well; but you must never forget that you are a professional man. My musical friends tell me that your playing of the Mass on Sunday was very brilliant. Don't be too brilliant, Keramur. The organ is a very large one; you must be sparing with the pedal reeds."

They discussed the technicalities of the organ for a few minutes, and then Ernest said hesitatingly: "You know the lady who was in the church last Friday evening?"

Monsignor meditated. "Oh, yes," said he, "you mean the lady who was interested in the organ, Lady Eva Fitzgower? I have met her once—twice I think. Why?"

"She did not come on Sunday morning though she almost promised me that she would."

"Promised you?"

"Yes. I walked with her to her home on Friday. She was at the church again on Monday—yesterday—at half-past six, while I was practising, and I met her afterwards in the porch. She was with another lady —her companion, I should think—and I told her about the Mass on Sunday."

"But did it interest her?"

"Not at first perhaps, but after a time it did. The other lady kept calling her attention to a victoria that was waiting outside the church. I suppose she

thought that I had no right to converse with Lady Eva, as I had not been formally introduced to her. The bourgeoisie in this country are so pompous and absurd."

Monsignor's face wore a sad smile. "Sit down, my son," said he. "The companion was right," he went on. "You should not have addressed Lady Eva, as she had not signified a wish that you should do so. I take it that she did not?"

"No."

"Well, after all, the matter is of no importance."

"It is a matter of importance to me, Father. I love Lady Eva Fitzgower, and I feel that God has ordained that she shall become my wife."

Monsignor started and looked at the speaker. It was his impulse to say "Nonsense!" but he checked himself upon observing the solemn face of the young man. "You know my regard for you, my son," said he kindly, "and how anxious I am that you should be successful in your career. But you are speaking foolishly. You've seen the lady only once—twice. Tut! tut! You have no time to indulge in such idle fancies."

"You misunderstand me," said the young man with hauteur. "I said that I loved this lady and that God has ordained that we shall come together. It is no question of idle fancies."

"The lady is in a different rank of life from you," said the priest. "She is a member of one of the historical families of England and the daughter of an eminent statesman. The idea of such a woman mar-

rying an organist is—well, to speak frankly, my son, is ridiculous."

Ernest paid no heed to this; he was gazing into vacancy, thinking of Eva. "She is unhappy," he began.

"How can you know anything about her?" asked the priest.

"I feel that I know a great deal about her. I think it probable that I shall be able to influence her——"

Again the priest interrupted him with an impatient gesture. "Circumstances have prevented you from mixing much with your fellows, Keramur, but for a man of three-and-twenty you show a strange ignorance of the world. God forbid that you should lose your simplicity of character, but I sometimes think that it would do you no harm to rub shoulders with men of your own age. However——" Monsignor waved his hand and smiled.

"I had hoped that you would not ridicule me," said Ernest solemnly. "I have not been brought up to regard these matters lightly. There is a tradition in our family that the heir is vouchsafed a vision of his future bride and a knowledge of her character before he beholds her in the flesh. This has been the case with me. The moment I saw Lady Eva I identified her, and the scene of our meeting was exactly as I had preconceived it. In all the circumstances I see the hand of God. As I told you, I seem to know a great deal about this lady, and I believe that I am destined to influence her career."

Monsignor was silent, not knowing how to take the

young Breton's effusion. "I am anxious to save you from a not uncommon fate, my son, that is all," said he at length. "Love for a woman hopelessly beyond his reach has ruined many a man's career."

When Ernest had quitted him he paced the room, shaking his head and muttering, "I had expected something of this kind. After all, the Keramurs are as good a family as the Fitzgowers. Now what do I remember about this lady?"

He had met her at Tanworth once, twice, thrice, and his first impression of her was that of a spoilt child. He recalled a big-boned girl of thirteen, who was much too old for her years and who spoke and argued with her elders in a fashion that displeased him. She was fifteen when he next met her, and a remarkably self-possessed young person; she helped her father to entertain his guests, and displayed the tact and knowledge of the world of a woman of one-and-twenty. At eighteen she was the Queen of Hearts and conscious of the fact: an exacting, dictatorial, haughty woman, who showed a liking for the society of distinguished elderly and middle-aged men, no doubt because they knew how to flatter her judiciously. To younger men she was proud and indifferent, and Monsignor recalled an incident in which she had played a very unamiable part. Her aunt, Lady Caterham, was anxious to bring about a match between her and a wealthy young nobleman who was in the habit of boasting of his horsemanship. His attentions were unwelcome to the girl, but he pressed them upon her, and in revenge, it was to be supposed, she

defied him to ride with her over a certain dangerous piece of ground. He could not but take up the challenge, and the result proved that he was, as she had no doubt suspected, a braggart, for the difficulties she surmounted easily overcame him, and he was thrown and brought home upon his back. Now to humiliate an obnoxious suitor in such a way as that was, to say the least of it, unkind. Then again Monsignor thought it unfeminine for ladies to shoot, and Lady Eva was in the habit of going out with the guns when he was last a guest at Tanworth. On the whole, therefore, his recollections of her were unfavourable, though her subsequent history awoke his compassion on her behalf. But the idea that she was destined to become the wife of Ernest de Keramur was of course absurd, and he dismissed it.

A little later Father Macdonald entered his room and said: "I have heard from Lady Newark and have arranged to see her here on Thursday."

"On Thursday? At what hour?"

"At seven."

This, it may be remembered, was the hour chosen for Eva's interview with Monsignor, but the latter did not remark upon the fact.

"It was as I told you," said Macdonald; "Sir Ralph has impressed her with the truth."

"Sir Ralph impressed her!" cried Monsignor. "My dear Macdonald, it must be a joke."

The Scotchman looked grave. "With due deference, Father, you underrate your nephew and he knows it, and it causes him much unhappiness."

"Dear me, I'm very sorry, but rouse him, Macdonald, make a man of him! By-the-by, have you ever met this Lady Newark? No? Nor have I; nor, I believe, has anybody else. What does Ralph say about her?"

"Very little, except that she is persecuted by her sister-in law."

"Ah, by Lady Eva. I had suspected that. Lady Eva herself has leanings——"

"Oh, no!" interrupted the other, "quite the reverse. She is hostile to us."

Monsignor shook his head. "From what I hear I rather fancy that we shall have trouble with these ladies," said he. "I had better tell you that I received two members of the Fitzgower family into the church last week. The Bishop of Winton's wife and son have joined us, but you must keep the matter secret for the present. There have been scenes, painful scenes, between the husband and wife, and they have agreed to live apart for a time. The Bishop is still, I think, ignorant of his son's conversion. Dear, dear me, how sad it all is!"

CHAPTER VI

The Sisters-in-Law

Apparently Lady Newark's revolt had been nipped in the bud. Eva had told her that she must not "unsettle her mind" by dwelling upon religious problems, and that a woman in her position was not at liberty to change her creed; the widow had bowed her head in submission and resumed her wonted manner, kissing and fondling her sister-in-law as of old; nothing more had been said upon the subject of the Church of Rome; and Eva regarded the incident as closed. For all that, the Marchioness intended to keep her appointment with Father Macdonald; but she had fallen back into a hopeless mood, and life at Newark House ran on in its accustomed groove.

The description of Eva's régime which Lady Newark had given to Mortimer would not have been recognised by the girl herself. She had no idea that she was regarded as a tyrant; she thought that her dear "little sister" was grateful to her for having undertaken the management of her affairs. The Marchioness was always thanking her, telling her that she loved her, exclaiming at her goodness and kindness, and it had never occurred to Eva to question the sincerity of these outpourings. Had anyone told her that the widow trembled under her glance she would not have

understood the statement, and yet it expressed the truth. Her methods of controlling her sister-in-law were extremely simple—the Marchioness had described them truthfully to Mortimer—she let the woman know how she was expected to act, speak, and think, and she glanced at her with her wonderful eyes. It was her endeavour to impress her with a sense of her exalted station: this was her object in surrounding her with luxuries, in arranging that her meals should be served with pomp and ceremony, that she should always be finely attired, that she should drive in the handsomest equipages, that the chief apartments at Tanworth and Cottesley should be thrown open when she visited those mansions. But Lady Newark was not the Queen, she was the Queen-Regent of the Fitzgower kingdom, according to her sister-in-law, and she must live in retirement, mourning her spouse and looking forward to the time when her son should grasp the sceptre. So exalted a person must be spared the trifling tasks that fall to the lot of ordinary mortals; she must not open a door herself—it must be opened for her; she must not rise to her feet to fetch an object that she wanted—it must be fetched for her. Once upon a time Eva had caught her in the act of poking the fire. "My dear little sister!" she had exclaimed in a tone of such tragical remonstrance that the Marchioness had dropped the poker in alarm, and with a sense that she had been guilty of a grave misdemeanour. Again, Eva had a habit common among imperious persons of attributing hypothetical tastes, ideas, fancies,

predilections to those with whom she came in contact. Thus the Marchioness was supposed to be interested in the works of Browning, and Miss Norris was told off to read aloud his works to her; she was also supposed to be interested in archaeology and in the records of our landed nobility, and when Eva had a spare moment she held forth for her amusement upon these subjects; she was supposed to entertain a great affection for Lady Braintree, who accordingly was rarely allowed to quit her; she was supposed to be unwell when in town (history does not relate how this fiction arose), though as a matter of fact London agreed with her, and she had said so once, but somehow the statement had been misunderstood. She always had been misunderstood when she had had the courage to be honest, till at length she had abandoned honesty altogether and assumed a complaisant demeanour while nourishing feelings of revenge and spite. She declared to Mortimer that the terrible Eva had undermined her character, that before her marriage the telling of a lie would have caused her more compunction than an ungraceful performance of the "cart-wheel," while at present it would cause her less compunction than the knowledge that she had pronounced the word "clerk" as it is written. Certainly, whatever she may have been in the past, she was now a bundle of falsity, and it shocked the honest Mortimer to observe her fondle her sister-in-law and cumber her with flattery when he knew that she hated the girl with all her heart.

Eva's lack of perception in regard to the widow

was a matter of astonishment to Miss Norris and even to Lady Braintree, who was by no means a sharp woman. Neither of these ladies thought that the situation would last, but neither dared even to hint at Lady Newark's mental condition to Eva, for they too feared her, as also did Mortimer who, despite his small stature, was a brave man. And yet Eva was an exceptionally charming girl—at times—and very generous and kind-hearted. Her frankness, her naturalness would have shocked many a stock jobber's daughter. But she was imperious and proud, and these qualities inspired fear in her companions and lent interest to the struggle upon which she had embarked with the Church of Rome, the most imperious and the proudest institution in the world.

It was probable that the tension of the situation between the sisters-in-law would have been relieved apart from the action of the Roman priests. A correspondence had lately taken place between Eva and her aunt, Lady Caterham, who in the name of the family implored the girl to allow them to resume relations with her and to make the acquaintance of "Tanworth's widow." The family had hoped that the girl's heart would soften towards them, but finding that it had not done so, they were willing to eat humble-pie, acknowledge that they were partly to blame in the dispute, and, what had most weight with Eva, to disclaim any intention of interfering with the arrangements she had made in regard to the Marchioness and her son. Eva was very clear on that point: she would meet her aunt, her two uncles and

her cousin upon this condition only, that they made no attempt to disturb her authority over her sister-in-law. And at length they had promised to agree to this condition.

It was on the Thursday morning and the ladies were at breakfast when Eva alluded to this matter. "It is possible, my little sister, that Lady Caterham will call upon us one day this week," said she, "and I hope that you will be so kind as to see her. You will forgive and forget? Ah, you are so so good! She is very quick and will see at once that we do not want to be intimate with her. She is—well, rather an imperious person; but we must not allow her to interfere with our plans."

A feeble glimmer came to Lady Newark's eyes, but soon disappeared. Lady Caterham was a woman and a Fitzgower, and from such a one no help was to be expected. However, she replied in the formal manner she had been taught to adopt; "Of course you know what is best, my dear sister, and I will see her as you wish it." And then she told the girl that she was "so so good and so so kind!" (These phrases were repeated over and over again by the sisters-in-law when they addressed each other; Eva indeed had got into the habit of employing them to others as well as to the Marchioness, and some folks thought them very gracious, and others, including Mortimer, thought them very, very tiresome. According to the family records one of the Fitzgower ladies in the time of the Regency was in the habit of condemning the eyes of the person she addressed. She meant

nothing by it, of course; her "d—n your eyes" was a mere trick of speech, that was all, and the "Thank you so so much. You are so so good. You are so so kind!" of her successor may be similarly described.)

Miss Norris and Lady Braintree pricked up their ears at the allusion to Lady Caterham. "Oh, I hope that Helen will not disturb us," cried the second named lady. "You know that she does disturb people, Eva."

The girl smiled reassuringly at her old kinswoman.

"But she will be hurt with me, and you know, Eva, that I have often wanted to see her, only you said that it was not advisable. And I have often wanted to see the Bishop." Lady Braintree ran on with some grumbling remarks under breath. She had taken Eva's side in the family feud and thereby incurred the enmity of Helen Lady Caterham, who led the other side. Miss Norris was also concerned by the news; with Lady Braintree she believed that Eva's tenure of power would come to an end the moment that another personality was brought to bear upon the Marchioness. They felt that matters were moving towards a crisis and that their sinecures were in peril; accordingly they listened with attention to the instructions Eva gave to her sister-in-law. Lady Newark was to receive Lady Caterham with the utmost kindness when and if she called, but she was to assume a formal manner towards her and to preserve her dignity. This was vague, but the Marchioness was to take her cue from Eva, who would be present

and who would make plain to Lady Caterham the terms of their relationship.

Eva spent the forenoon in a small chamber that adjoined her boudoir. She also felt that a crisis was at hand, but a crisis in which the Marchioness was only indirectly concerned. Her interview with Monsignor Vancelour that was to take place to-day might have far-reaching consequences. The priest might, she almost hoped that he would, force down her opposition to the Church of Rome, lead her into the fold, entrap her, yes, entrap her, for once she had entered that fold she felt that she would never retrace her steps. And then? Why then the floodgates of her nature would be open and her emotions would rush forth to an object. She was a woman of strong passions, she must love passionately or not at all; be a Catholic or a pagan, namely, a brilliant woman of the world. What many of us regard as fanatical piety was easier to her than a quiet dutiful worship. This was apparent when she took up a crucifix that had lain upon a table with its face downwards, and gazed at it. An ecstatic love was visible upon her countenance; she clasped the symbol with her two hands and held it in front of her; the tears welled up in her beautiful eyes, her bosom heaved, her whole frame shook with emotion. Her treatment of the crucifix had not always been so reverent; she had hung it inverted above her bed-head, hidden it away, and several times been on the point of destroying it. Other religious symbols had been similarly used, among them a picture of the Sacred Heart, which lay at pres-

ent in a drawer with its glass smashed. The little room itself, which had been fitted up as an oratory, had several times been dismantled. For she was an intensely proud woman, and she knew what a sacrifice of pride Rome demands of her children; she craved for what Rome offers or claims to offer, but she was not disposed to pay Rome's price for it.

However, she engaged in no struggle this forenoon. She recalled the tragedy of her life, the love she had poured out to the Duke of Oakham, the confidence she had given him, his speeches, looks, caresses, and shuddered. She rubbed her finger over her lips and then over her cheek, drew her breath in jerks, broke down and wept scalding tears. She had chosen that man from a host, and if he who appeared so noble was in truth so vile, what must other men be like? Ah, the world was an iniquitous place and she would retire from it, take the veil, join the severest order of nuns! Her spirits rose. Eminence in the world was not worth having, eminence in the Church was, and she thrilled at the thought of that holy woman, that spiritual sister of St. Teresa and St. Clare, herself of the future, the transfigured Eva Fitzgower! God was calling her to a great spiritual career. Her spirits again rose, and she tasted of an exquisite joy; she had not interpreted herself aright. Proud? Of course she had been proud and rightly so; she had been and could again be great, if she chose, in the world, but she scorned greatness in such a sphere. Henceforth she would be great in the Church!

In the afternoon she ordered the landau, entered it

with her companion, Miss Norris, and was driven in the Park. It was a balmy spring day, and the bright sun veiled at intervals by light silvery clouds, the gentle breezes, the verdure, the flowers in bloom, the scent-laden air, the singing of the birds stirred her blood. The forthcoming interview was forgotten, the recent past blotted out; and when she approached the fashionable quarter of the Park, the bounding figures in the Row, the ceaseless flow of carriages, the brilliant toilettes, the movement, colour, sound, and gaiety of the scene brought back to her the delightful feelings of her early girlhood. She beheld herself in a tight-fitting habit, and mounted on her chestnut barb, galloping over the red-brown surface of the Row. How proud her father had been of her bold horsemanship! Memories of her old triumphs crowded in upon her. She was led away in thought to Tanworth, and a series of brilliant pictures arose and passed before her mental vision. Grave statesmen, diplomatists, ecclesiastics, men famous in the arts and letters had paid homage to her. She recalled the scene of her presentation and the giddy bewildering life of her first season. Now she was in London, now at Tanworth, now at Cottesley, now at other country houses, now abroad. Flattery and admiration were her due; it was in the order of things that everybody should treat her with respect, and she was gracious to everyone as a matter of course.

She was revelling in these memories, and experiencing as of old that tingling feeling in the blood, that intoxication of the spirit, that delightful conscious-

ness of beauty, power, and wealth, which the Church designates as the Pride of Life, when Miss Norris called her attention to a strange figure in the crowd below. He was a long, lean, gaunt man and had a visage something like Dante's; a habit of dwelling upon the heinousness of sin and the punishment of the wicked had stamped a grim look upon his countenance. He was Father Macdonald, an impersonator of Rome's ascetic spirit, a mouthpiece of her warnings, threats, anathemas; and as Eva glanced at him the radiance left her face, and she realised with a pang the distance she had travelled since the forenoon. She tried, but tried in vain, to recall the mood in which a nun's life offered such attractions to her; even as she muttered, "No, no!" to what she thought the tempter's voice, she thrilled; scenes of brilliant colour, of strong but noble passion were enacted in the theatre of her imagination.

A few minutes later she again espied Father Macdonald, and this time her high-stepping bays brought the carriage close to the path he was treading, so that he looked up suddenly, glanced at her, and frowned. The poor man was not to blame; he was saying his office at the time, and the sight of a handsome woman magnificently dressed is apt to disturb a man at his devotions; but, as we all know, irreparable harm may be done by an innocent person, and that frown of Father Macdonald's brought terrible consequences to the Church of Rome. The champion of the Pope, the spiritual sister of St. Teresa and St. Clare became forthwith the bitter enemy of Catholicism; deliber-

ately, of set purpose, with malice and revenge in her heart she began her attack upon Rome; multitudes were deprived of the benefit of the sacraments, and all the joys and consolations and blessings of the Church, because forsooth a woman's pride had been wounded by a stupid priest! With a sad though fascinated eye she contemplated the havoc and ruin she had wrought — and then awoke to sense and reality, consulted her watch, and found that her appointment with Monsignor Vancelour was due in half an hour.

Oh, why, why had she not remained in her oratory and prepared herself for the momentous interview! In her nervous excitement she thought, mistakenly, that she would have to make her confession to the priest this afternoon, and her colour came and went as she dwelt upon that idea. She must make known to that dignified and courtly gentleman all her wrongful deeds, her sins of commission and omission, the evil tendencies of her nature, her weaknesses, her singularities; she must acquaint him with the general tenor of her ideas, many of her most secret thoughts, much of her history; she must reveal to him the animating and essential part of her, her spiritual, rational and immortal being; she must allow him to discuss and criticise her; she must listen to his counsel; she must perform such penance as he should enjoin upon her. No, no, it was impossible for her to submit to such an ordeal; she *could not* do so. Nevertheless she ordered the coachman to drive to Church Lane and to stop on reaching it; the order was obeyed; she

stepped from the vehicle, nodded to Miss Norris, watched the carriage till it disappeared behind the angle of a house, and then turned and walked slowly towards the presbytery of St. Peter's.

CHAPTER VII

Rejected!

She was shown into a small room furnished with a table, three chairs, and a priedieu; a crucifix and three engravings were upon the walls; there was no carpet and nothing upon the table except a case for notepaper, an ink-pot, and a blotting-pad.

Upon consulting her watch she found that she was ten minutes before her time, and this enabled her to compose herself and decide upon her course before Monsignor appeared. His greeting would be friendly, not formal, she anticipated, for he had been her father's, it might almost be said her own, guest. He belonged to her own class, and when "in the world" must have met many of the friends of her youth; he would therefore understand the special difficulties and temptations that beset a woman in her position. But he would have to understand a great deal more than that if the interview were to be successful; he would have to know something of her character before she could make intelligible to him her attitude towards the Roman Church. (She had recovered from her nervous excitement by this time, and knew that she would not have to make her confession this afternoon.) She therefore determined to give him a frank and naïve account of herself, describing briefly

her life in the days of her social triumphs, and referring to, though not explaining the nature of, the tragedy that had changed her outlook upon life. Then, and not till then, she would endeavour to explain to him her attitude towards Rome; but by that time he would know much about her, his interest and sympathy would be aroused, and he would regard her as—well, as an unusual person, say, a proud person certainly, but as one in whom some pride was to be expected. In short, though of course her ladyship did not put it in this way to herself, he would be impressed by her personality and hasten to secure so valuable a prize for his church. He would be subtle, he would play the Jesuit, make matters easy for her, compromise a bit, yield a little on behalf of Rome, and ease his conscience with the reflection that if her disposition were less humble than the Church demands from those who wish to join her, her zeal and enthusiasm when she had entered the fold would be unusually great, and consequently that it behoved Rome to accept her as she was and as soon as possible. Such was Eva's forecast of the interview, though she would have viewed with indignation the person who told her so; him she would not have thought "so so good and so so kind!"

Punctually at the time appointed Monsignor entered the room, wearing a cassock, and holding his berretta in his hand. In appearance he realised the ideal of the Roman Catholic priest; dignity, the air of authority, the paternal air, and that air of mystery that should appertain to the sacerdotalist were his, and

Eva felt them before he opened his mouth. She was pleased; it was well that she should deal with Rome through such a stately representative, and she smiled and made him a graceful and respectful bow. He bowed in return, motioned her to a seat, his large blue eyes regarding her with that mixture of amusement and admiration that we bestow upon a beautiful child, and said: "It was in this month that we first met at Tanworth. But your memory does not go back so far as that?"

"Oh, yes," said she, smiling with pleasure. "I remember your first visit quite well. My aunt was with us; but you were—were not at that time . . ."

"No, I was not a priest then," said he. "I had just returned from Vienna where I met Lord Newark. When I last visited Tanworth I took with me a parcel of school-boys who I fear gave your servants some little trouble."

"Oh, you should have told me that you were going there!" said she in a pretty tone of reproach. "I am so sorry that you should have gone with the crowd. And the little boys, I should so much have liked to show them the place myself. I think it does instruct people—don't you, Father?—to keep such places open."

There was some more conversation in this vein, the priest speaking less and the lady more as it proceeded, till the former, who had been nodding his head, smiled and made a little movement with his hand. It was extremely well done; it was as though he said: "This is delightful. I am much interested.

I should like to go on listening to you for hours. But we are here for a purpose, are we not? I merely suggest it."

Eva gave a little sigh, her face became grave, and her tone altered. In a very low voice and without looking at her companion she said: "I want you to help me, Father. For some time past I have been thinking of the Catholic Church. It attracts me and sometimes I wish to join it. I don't think that I have any intellectual difficulties. I believe all that the Church teaches—at times. At other times," and she dropped her voice to a whisper, "I do not like the Church; I feel hostile to it."

"Are you a member of the Establishment?" asked the priest in a voice so different from that he had formerly employed that she looked up at him quickly and noticed that the expression of his face had also changed. It was sympathetic, but grave and solemn.

"I was brought up as an Anglican," she replied; "but from the time I was presented till a little more than a year ago I thought very little about religion. I had practically lost my faith. Then great troubles fell upon me. My father died suddenly and—and other terrible events occurred, and then I wanted consolation and could find none."

This was in the right key; the priest's face expressed sympathy and interest, and he muttered a few consolatory words; whereupon all nervousness and anxiety quitted Eva, for he was treating her as she had anticipated that he would and as she desired.

"But how came you to lose your faith?" he asked.

She meditated a while before she answered. "I am afraid that it will shock you, Father, but till my troubles fell upon me I thought religion a matter of very small importance. The world was bright and I was happy and . . ." She paused and coloured. "It is a little difficult to explain. I was, I suppose, in a fortunate position, and people were so so kind to me, perhaps too kind . . ."

"Quite so, quite so," interrupted the priest in a bland and soothing tone. "You were young and thoughtless."

But Eva resented that description of herself. Proud she may have been in the days of her social triumphs, and she was prepared to hear her former ways denounced; but the priest's tone implied that hers was an ordinary case, and for that she was not prepared.

"Worse than thoughtless I fear," said she. "I am afraid that I was guilty of pride, and I often think that God sent me misfortunes to punish me for my pride."

Monsignor bowed his head two or three times, but said nothing. Apparently he was not much impressed by, not much interested in, what she told him; it was as though he had heard it all before and attached little importance to it. And yet she was revealing glimpses of her character to him, a man who was almost a stranger to her, admitting him into her confidence, telling him the intimate secrets of her nature! She felt mortified and disappointed. She tried to suppress these feelings, however, and went on in the same strain: "I began to lose my faith after a dispute

I had with the rector of Tanworth. I disapproved the drift of two or three of his sermons and his treatment of the poor in the district, and I spoke to him —well, I am afraid rather arrogantly, and he complained to my father. My dear father was a little annoyed with me for the first and only time in his life, and that hurt me very much, and made me very angry with the rector. Now Professor Crewkerne, the great scientific man, was stopping with us at the time. He was always very kind to me. I wanted to discuss the rector's sermons with him, but at first he would not say anything about them; I pressed him, however, and then—very reluctantly—he supplied me with arguments that I could use against the rector. I did use them, and I think that I got the better of my opponent—at all events my friends declared that I did. It so happened that I never could get on with the clergymen who held my father's livings. I was always disputing with them; they would never carry out my wishes; they were so very obstinate. When little more than a child I used . . . But of course I was presumptuous and—and . . . Well, I got the reputation of being rather an intellectual person, an independent thinker. Some of the younger clergy who used to visit us at Tanworth were, or pretended that they were, afraid of me; at the same time they always listened to what I said. And then Mr. Tufnell, the great essay writer, used to say kind things . . ."

"I do not think it necessary that you should recall these details now," interrupted the priest.

Details! Poor Eva! She started as though she had been struck. She had intended to give him a brief record of some of the earlier passages of her career and gradually to lead him up to the present, and she had hoped to awake his interest and sympathy by her naïve recital. Unless he knew something of her character and the circumstances in which it had been developed, how could she make intelligible to him her attitude towards the Church of Rome? And was Monsignor insensible to the effort it cost her to confess her shortcomings to him? Was not she sacrificing her pride by admitting that she had been proud?

Her ladyship was perhaps unaware of the complacent tone in which she had alluded to her shortcomings, and of the complacent expression her face had assumed. Then her demeanour was not that of a suppliant, and her posture was a little irreverent. She had crossed her legs, and revealed a brightly varnished boot!

"It would be better if you described to me your present disposition towards the Church," the priest continued. "You say that you believe all she teaches *sometimes*. That is scarcely faith."

"But if I became a Catholic I should never be tempted to doubt what the Church teaches. I am quite sure of that. I am not—well, I am not much interested in theology. It is best that I should become a Catholic at once."

"You will have to devote some time to preparation before you can be received into the Church; you must

be instructed. Certainly I will help you, and God grant that in due course you may become a Catholic. But you must come to the Church in a spirit of humility, you must come to learn; you must be convinced that she is the divinely accredited teacher, and you must trust and love her."

"I do love her," cried Eva. "I have seen—who has not?—women, and men, too, weeping over their beads and kissing the feet of a statue of the Saviour, and I have envied them their living, burning, passionate faith. I believe that only in the Church of Rome is such faith to be found. I don't think you understand my difficulty, Father. I can assure you that I often feel inclined to do all that I can for the Church, to help her to the utmost limit of my power."

"But you must first *submit* to her; you must humbly *submit* to God's holy Church."

Well, this priest most certainly could not be accused of judiciousness, thought Eva bitterly; he at all events did not use the weapons of a man of the world; he assuredly was no Jesuit. To employ that word of all others—submit! a word most repugnant to her! Surely, surely he might have hit upon a less offensive word!

"If I became a Catholic I should devote myself entirely to the Church," she cried vehemently. "I should make her interests my own; I should think no more of the past, I should begin again, start a new chapter in my life. This is what I am so anxious to make plain to you, Father."

"Why do you say *if* I became a Catholic?"

"Because in my case the change would be a momentous one, and it is natural, therefore, that I should hesitate before making it. You will pardon me, Father, but I have known two or three women who have joined the Church of Rome, and they were good women before their change of creed and they are good women now; but they have not altered their way of living. They were and still are very fashionable women, they go everywhere, and one of them is about to make a—well, a very brilliant marriage. Now such women as these could change their religion more easily than one like myself, who on changing her creed would completely change her ideas of life and her way of living. And yet the women to whom I refer experienced no difficulty in being received into the Church," she added bitterly.

"I fully believe that there are possibilities of greater zeal and religious feeling in you than in the ladies you describe," remarked the priest. "But I am bound to tell you that at present you are not in the right disposition, that you need instruction. You do not approach the Holy and True, the Oracle of God, in the right spirit. It is as though you were offering her an alliance, which is absurd, and your talk of helping her is at the present juncture presumptuous. You must come to the Church to learn, you must be convinced that she is God's appointed teacher, you must not anticipate a time when you will disbelieve in her; you must approach her as a child approaches its mother. You do love her, you say; then why are you at times hostile to her? By-the-by

at such times does any other er—er—Church appeal to you?"

"Yes, bigoted Protestantism."

"Because of its antagonism to Rome?"

"Yes."

"Your hostility to Rome may be described as a determined resistance to the influence it exerts over your mind?"

"Yes."

"But from this time forth you will of course never resist the influence?"

"That depends upon whether I join the Church."

Then after a pause she cried more vehemently than before: "But what I am so anxious to impress upon you is that *if* I joined the Church I should never disbelieve in her, that, on the contrary, I should believe and trust and love her with all my heart and soul, that I should hate her enemies and devote my whole life to serving her! Surely, surely, Father, other converts are not so zealous and enthusiastic?"

"No; they are not."

"And yet you say I am not in the right disposition."

"But of course you very soon will be."

"I am not so sure of that," said Eva, losing her temper. "I am what I am; I cannot alter myself."

"You can pray for humility," said the priest rather sternly.

At that Eva coloured and inflated her nostrils.

"But of course you will obey God's call," said Monsignor in his wonted manner, "and submit your-

self humbly to His guidance. And you will devote some time to prayer and preparation and allow yourself to be instructed in the doctrines of the Church?"

But Eva did not intend to commit herself to that course. She was piqued and mortified. He refused to admit her into the Roman Church until she changed her character, which was an impossibility; he rejected her on behalf of Rome. Her love for that Church and all her enthusiasm and zeal and promise of lifelong service were haughtily declined. She must be prepared, instructed. Yes, and reduced to the position of a slave. For it was slavery that the arrogant Church demanded of her children! Her anger rose against the man, who had wounded her pride by showing so little interest in her confidences and asserting that she was not worthy of admittance into his Church. Still she had to answer his last question and to observe the rules of politeness.

"I will think about it," said she. And then she rose to her feet, braced her figure, and glanced at her companion with a haughty smile. It was as though she were bidding him observe her whom he had rejected. Her superb eyes expressed her pride, her consciousness of power, and they challenged his to meet them. For a moment—but only for a moment—she surrendered to the unworthy idea of appealing to the man in him and of compelling his admiration—he had wounded her and she would be revenged upon him! But the next moment she was heartily ashamed of herself. His eyes did not meet hers; he dropped them, not gradually as though he were

dazzled or self-conscious, but instantly as though he divined her thoughts. And then when shame at her unworthy conduct had brought the colour to her cheeks and relaxed the muscles of her frame, he looked up. But his kindly blue eyes expressed no surprise, no reproof; they were as benevolent as usual. Poor Eva! She had an impulse to throw herself at his feet and beg his pardon, but of course she checked it. Her splendid frame, her glowing beauty, her magnificent apparel, with which she had wished to force from him a manly tribute to her womanly charms, were now hateful to her; self-consciousness almost deprived her of the power of motion; she walked haltingly along the dim passage, with bent head and rounded shoulders, like a criminal before an upright judge; and when she had reached the door of the presbytery she turned and in a broken voice said, "You will pray for me, Father?"

"Certainly," said he, and he took her hand in his and pressed it slightly.

But her mood soon changed. No sooner was she out of doors than her spirit rose in revolt against the influence that Rome exerted over her mind. Twice it had drawn her into the presence of the priest, and on both occasions she had quitted him with feelings of humiliation. She would escape from the tyrannical idea, the obsession. She had led too secluded a life, dwelt too much upon her sorrows, become disgusted with the world, morbid, and thus weakened her mind and rendered it liable to be possessed by a fascinating idea. She would return to the world, to

her place in society, and enjoy herself as she had done before her troubles fell upon her. The thought braced her, and she threw her head back and proceeded on her way with a proud step. But the particulars of the humiliating interview returned again and again to her mind, especially the lamentable scene that had preceded her leave-taking with the priest. Ah, that odious exhibition of feminine perversity! "No, no, no!" she muttered. How could she have been guilty of such conduct? Instead of trying to rebuild her pride, should she not return to Monsignor and crave admittance into the Church by placing herself upon the level of the humblest apple woman? But no; her limbs failed her, she could not retrace her steps, and thereupon she made a vow never again to enter a Roman church nor to seek an interview with a priest.

On reaching home she found a letter from her aunt, Lady Caterham, awaiting her. It was a nice and kind, indeed a humble and in parts a pathetic, missive. The writer wished, if it were convenient to her niece and Lady Newark, to call upon them that evening after dinner; she was sorry to give them so short a notice, but a feeling of melancholy had "quite overcome her" that afternoon, and she longed to see her dear Eva and to make the acquaintance of "Tanworth's widow." She told Eva that she was in ailing health, and that of late she had suffered great pecuniary losses; alluded to the "terrible misfortunes" that had occurred to her brother, the Bishop, and spoke of the "sad folly" of her younger brother,

Colonel Fitzgower. Surely, surely Eva was as anxious as herself to bring the family dispute to an end!

Fresh from her encounter with Monsignor Vancelour Eva was in the mood to appreciate the kindness and humility of her aunt, and she sent her a note by hand, bidding her welcome to Newark House. Her thoughts then went back to the scene and subsequent correspondence that had led to the breach between her and her kinsfolk. She had acted on the behalf and, as she believed, in the interests of the Marchioness, but her action must have seemed high-handed and unkind to her aunt and uncles. They had had no proof that Tanworth had married the woman he had been living with, nor that he had been sane when making his will, and why should they have taken for granted matters of such vast importance to the family? To be sure, Eva had volunteered to bring them conclusive evidence on those points, but it was natural that they should wish to investigate them on their own account. The cohabitation of a man of notoriously loose character with a woman of low origin was scarcely a subject for discussion with a young unmarried girl. And though they had used unnecessarily harsh words to her, and in the subsequent correspondence attributed unworthy motives to her, they were angry, and angry people were apt to be unjust. Well, she would welcome them to Newark House, and allow them to meet her little sister, so long as they made no attempt to interfere with "her plans."

Her dream of a religious career was over. The

Church door had been slammed in her face; henceforth she would be frankly of the world. After all Rome's view of the world was not the only view; it was indeed a view that very few people really shared; it was quite possible to live a dignified life and yet be frankly worldly. She and her dear little sister would emerge from their retirement and surround themselves with distinguished men and well-bred women; her kinsfolk should join their circle; a new chapter in her life should be opened on the morrow.

CHAPTER VIII

Lady Newark and Father Macdonald

Lady Newark's interview with Father Macdonald almost synchronised with Eva's interview with Monsignor Vancelour, though neither lady was aware of the fact. Neither indeed had an idea that the other had arranged an appointment with a priest. Eva was not in the habit of discussing herself with her sister-in-law, but she had told her that she was interested in the Church of Rome and possibly might join it; she had explained to the Marchioness that she herself was a free agent and at liberty to change her creed, whereas such an idea on the part of her "dear little sister" must be repressed in deference to the memory of her husband and in view of her son's future. To be sure the infant Marquis would in any case be brought up in the religion of his father, but if his mother joined the Church of Rome she could not but influence his mind in the direction of Catholicism. Had anyone protested on Lady Newark's behalf that every woman has the right to join the church she believes in, Eva would have rejoined that her sister-in-law was a weak-minded person, had no religious convictions, was merely following a whim, or had yielded temporarily to the influence of an impertinent stranger, Sir Ralph Vancelour.

Lady Newark's idea of joining the Roman Church in the hope either that the news of her change of creed would reach the other members of the Fitzgower clan and induce them to hurry to her rescue and free her from Eva's yoke, or that, in the event of the news falling flat, she might have a pliable Father confessor to back her up when she wished to run counter to Eva's wishes, testified to the mental condition the weak and cowardly woman had reached under her sister-in-law's régime. But could she carry the idea into effect? Alas! she feared she could not; she would lack the courage when it came to the point. Nevertheless she would keep her appointment with Father Macdonald because that seemed an easier course than to write to him and to Sir Ralph to say that her disposition towards the Roman Church had changed. And after all "something might come of the interview!" Romish priests were reputed to be clever fellows; in any case they were men, and no man in all the world could be so cruel, unjust, and tyrannical as her "dear sister," her "noble-minded Eva," who was always "so so good and so so kind!"

It was not until she was shown into Father Macdonald's parlour and there left to herself that she realised the difficulties of her position. How was she to explain herself to the priest? What was she to say to him? She had never seen him, she knew nothing about him, she fervently hoped that he was a weak, kind man. But presently her eyes were attracted by two engravings upon the walls, which

were not of a nature to allay her fears. They were representations of works by Orcagna and Luca Signorelli, and they depicted with startling effect the torments of the damned. Poor Lady Newark! They seemed to warn her that she had entered the sanctum of a severe and terrible man; and when the door opened and the tall, grim-looking priest appeared, all her powers deserted her. Her eyes rose from his breast to his face and remained fixed upon it in a blank, stupid stare; she experienced a feeling of weakness in her knees, and had an impulse to sink gradually to the ground, gazing up at him the while.

"Lady Newark?" he asked.

"Yes," said she feebly, doubtfully, whereupon he glanced suspiciously at her from under his heavy brows, for her tone suggested that she was claiming a name that was not her own.

She was aware that he motioned her to a chair, and, when she had taken it, that he seated himself; then the deep voice said, "You wish to consult with me?"

As a matter of fact she wished to run away from him, but she nodded her head without looking up.

Her manner was very strange, but he had an hypothesis to account for it. "You are in distress?" said he. "You have come to God's holy Church for consolation? Sorrows, misfortunes have fallen upon you?"

"No, no," she muttered, shaking her head. "I have come——" But how could she tell him why she had come to him? Her distress, however, was

obvious, and as she said it was not caused by sorrow or misfortune, Father Macdonald naturally concluded that it resulted from the anguish of a wounded conscience. He accordingly uttered some remarks upon the mercy of God and spoke of the sacrament of penance. "Your distress will vanish when you have entered the Church and confessed your sins to your Maker," said he. "Do not despair. However great your sin——"

But again she interrupted him, muttering as before, "No, no," and shaking her head. She perceived that he was under a false impression regarding her, and to assume the character of a penitent might land her into further difficulties. But she did not go on to say what was the matter with her, nor what she wanted of him; she sat with her elbow upon the table supporting her downcast head with her hand, the picture of distress.

"It is not necessary that you should tell me what has made you so unhappy," said he. "You need tell me very little about yourself. You are obeying the call of God; you wish to be received into His holy Church——"

But yet again she interrupted him, muttering, "No, no," and shaking her head.

"Then why on earth are you here and what in heaven's name do you want?" a man of the world might have been tempted to demand; but Father Macdonald had another hypothesis to explain her conduct. The woman was labouring under the burden of sin and had come to him to be received

into the Church and eased of her load of guilt; but, as often happened, the enemy was tempting her while she was in the very act of carrying out her good resolution. And she was wavering; the evil spirit was holding her back; 'twas a critical moment; no time was to be lost; if she quitted him in her present state she might never return again, she might be lost! Accordingly he braced himself; his thin ascetic face assumed its grimmest aspect; he drew her attention to himself by putting forth his arm and raising his forefinger; and in a low and solemn tone he warned her of the punishment due to sin. He startled her; she forgot all about her troubles, anxieties, falsities; her eyes remained fixed upon him while he held forth upon the wrath of God and the terrors of the world to come. His manner was not calculated to give offence; he seemed to be addressing and warning himself and others as well as her, recalling a vision, describing an awful scene he had witnessed. He spoke of the vain regrets, the fearful misery, the despair, the utter desolation of the lost, and his deep voice, grim physiognomy, and attenuated frame lent aid to his words and helped him to make a profound impression.

Fear was the strongest emotion in Lady Newark's nature. In the old days when she had earned her livelihood as a ballet dancer she had been haunted by the idea that she was a wicked woman for following such a career, and had cast wistful glances at the Baptist chapel and looked enviously at the Hallelujah lasses. She had had no inclination towards a life of

vice, but had lived in constant dread that circumstances would prove too strong for her, that she would be led astray, and, as she would have frankly said, ruined. The curious thing was that no one had made it his or her business to "convert" her, for the process might have been effected with ease; half an hour's "straight talk" would have brought her to the "penitent form"; but as it happened she had never met a strong representative of any creed. The brief period of her married life had passed like a dream, an unpleasant dream, the latter part of it a nightmare, from which she had awakened to find herself in the hands of Eva, under whose influence her fears had taken another direction. Formerly she had been afraid of "going wrong" and thus incurring future punishment; more recently she had been afraid of being guilty of conduct unbecoming in a Marchioness and thus incurring social disgrace. An "artificial conscience," so to speak, was bred in her, and though at first she distinguished between its voice and that of her real conscience, as time went on she began to confound them. She had gone to Father Macdonald in fear of Eva and all that Eva represented, but the priest's harangue had driven that fear from her mind and revived her older fear of the wrath of God. She forgot that she was a Marchioness, was conscious only that she was a sinful human being, and therefore in danger of the punishment that the priest so vividly described.

Perceiving that he had made the impression he desired, Father Macdonald hastened to reassure her.

"But while there is life there is hope," said he. "If we are wise we will consider the punishment due to sin, but——"

"Oh, I want to tell you everything!" she cried, at length finding her voice. "I don't think I am so bad as you think. But—but I want to know. I want you to tell me. I—I——" The poor woman was inarticulate.

"You are not making your confession to me."

"But I want to—do let me!"

"It is not advisable at this stage," said he. "You must be prepared and received——"

"Oh!"

"But you wish to join the Church?" he asked.

"I—I don't know."

"It seems to me that you are in a very dangerous state," said he severely. "Is it possible that you are trifling——?"

"Oh, no!" she cried with obvious sincerity.

"Then——"

"Do—do let me tell you everything—everything about myself!"

He considered for a while. He did not want to hear what she had done, though of course if she had been a Catholic he would have heard her confession without a moment's hesitation. "Well, if you think that I can help you in any way——," he hesitated. "Very well, then. Don't mention the name of any other person." Saying which he turned his head away from her and with his eyes upon the ground listened to her tale.

It was a naïve tale, a brief record of the life of a timid, small-minded, feeble-hearted woman. She made no attempt to preserve her dignity; in referring to her professional days she admitted her lapses from truth, her spitefulness, and a host of petty vices; on the other hand, she laid stress upon the fact that she had preserved her purity.

Father Macdonald's face assumed a sympathetic expression; he perceived her sincerity, the admirable state of mind that had succeeded to her fit of dogged obstinacy, and he was prepared to be kind and gentle with her no matter how terrible was the sin she was about to reveal to him.

She related how she had made the acquaintance of her husband and her disinclination to accept his proposal. With much earnestness she assured the priest that she had not aspired to a great marriage, as though such an aspiration were sinful, and then she passed on to the bitter days of her widowhood. Poor little woman! The tears gathered to her eyes. She felt that Father Macdonald would not be able to understand the misery she had endured under Eva's régime, more especially as she tried her utmost to do that young woman justice. (She did not mention her by name.) In her anxiety to be honest she almost exaggerated her own falsities, deceits, and evil wishes against her sister-in-law. But was there no excuse for her? she asked. Was it right that she should have been made so unhappy? Surely, surely—and as she put this question her voice shook and her eyes pleaded for mercy—her salvation was not in peril?

Surely Father Macdonald would give her hope that God would pardon her her sins?

But the priest remained silent. And then, "Yes?" said he. "Go on."

But she seemed to have nothing more to say, and Father Macdonald, after glancing at her with astonishment, cried, "Is—is that all?"

Well, it was nearly all, and she intended to tell him what remained when she had dried her eyes.

"Why, my child, you are attaching importance to mere trifles," said he, and then he who would have remained calm if she had accused herself of bigamy or even murder felt confused and at a loss for words. Was it possible that her great distress and fear of the divine wrath had been occasioned by the peccadillos, for they hardly amounted to more than that, which she had confessed? But if, as seemed to be the case, she needed encouragement and confidence in God's mercy, why had she rejected his attempt to reassure her on that point?

"These doubts as to your soul's welfare," he began, when she interrupted him.

"They did not occur to me till you spoke of future punishment. I mean I had not dwelt on those doubts for years."

This added to his perplexity. "Still you obeyed God's call when He summoned you to His Church."

She shook her head, and then at length Father Macdonald lost his patience and was about to speak harshly when a thought suddenly struck him. Whatever may have been her motive in coming to

him there she was, and whatever had caused her distress she was distressed; her guilt was not so great as she imagined, but if she had not had an exaggerated sense of it she would probably not have been with him at that moment; in any case it would be manifestly to her advantage to become a Catholic, and it was manifestly his duty to try to make her one.

"It is plain to me that you have been neglecting religion, your duty to God," said he a trifle sternly. "If you fixed your mind upon things of real importance you would be able to bear the small troubles of life more easily. You say that you are unhappy, but how can you expect to be happy when you are not at peace with your Maker and not at peace with your conscience? Your mind is in a state of confusion. I gather that you have lost your sense of responsibility, your power of will, your self-respect, that you are at the mercy of any chance influence that is brought to bear upon you. How can you be happy while you remain in such a state? You have told me many things about yourself, but you have kept back, or rather you don't seem to realise, what is really amiss with you. You have neglected your soul, you have neglected your soul! Go humbly to God, seek instruction from one of the ministers of His holy religion, and you will soon gain strength and attain to peace."

"You mean that I had better turn Romanist?"

"Ah, that you should ask the question! You crave for freedom, for independence—you have said so—and what prevents your having it? You are a

free agent; no one is entitled to control you or make you unhappy. You dare not take the means to effect your freedom, and why? Because you have no belief in yourself and would not know what to do with your freedom if you had it. Am I not right?"

"Yes, yes."

"And now I come to the point. You are not fit to be free at present. No one is who has no fixed principles and no definite creed to fall back upon. Everybody is in need of moral support, you if possible more than most people, because circumstances have placed you in a position of responsibility. It is to your credit that you recognise this; much, indeed, that you have told me about yourself redounds to your credit. You followed a career that is peculiarly beset with temptation and you preserved your purity. Ah, my daughter, thank God for that! You said that you felt the difficulties of your former state and that now you feel the difficulties of your present state——"

"Ah, but they are so different," she interrupted.

"Yes, but both arise from the same cause—distrust of self. And of course you are self-distrustful when you are unsupported by religion."

Well, it was true that she wanted moral support, but she also wanted personal support, so to speak; in other words, she wanted some one to be present to back her up when she encountered Eva and possibly the other members of the family. Again, she wanted some one to help her to manage her affairs. In short, if she were to go over to Rome, as at this

moment she wished to do, a representative of that Church must come boldly forward, face Eva and possibly the other Fitzgowers, and snatch her from their grasp. She found it difficult to explain this to Father Macdonald, but he was very quick and gathered her meaning from her disjointed sentences. He advised her not to be precipitate, not to be in a hurry, not to engage in any scenes.

"But to-night!" the poor woman exclaimed. "I couldn't face *her*, I couldn't really! I must behave to her as I have always behaved or—or round on her!"

"I should say nothing about the matter to-night if I were you," said he. "You will be excited to-night."

"Yes, but that's my only chance; if I am not excited I shall never be able to say anything at all. It must happen—everything must happen to-night!"

"What a very tyrannical person that woman must be," thought Father Macdonald, referring to Lady Newark's *her*. Aloud: "No, no, try to avoid scenes and recriminations," said he. "You are going to take a very important step, a step that will influence your whole life, and what is so much more important, your hereafter. Think of that, ponder it——"

"Then I shall never dare to take the step," she interrupted vehemently. "I dare not call my soul my own. Couldn't you come to me this evening? After all it is my own house. Everything must happen this evening. Come to me—do!"

"It would be so much better that I didn't," said

he, "so much better that you should devote some time to reflection, to calm thought, to prayer before bringing the matter before your relations. You must not let it be thought that you are following a whim, that——"

"Then I must go somewhere else; I dare not face her alone. Ah, Sir Ralph! Perhaps he would come!"

"No no," persisted the priest, and again advised her to dwell upon spiritual matters for the present. But it was not a bit of good; the woman was in a state of nervous collapse; and at length Father Macdonald, with many misgivings and with strong feelings against the course, despatched a telegram to Sir Ralph Vancelour, bidding him come at once to the presbytery.

Upon returning to the room he found Lady Newark somewhat calmer. She brought before him the other matter that was causing her anxiety, namely, the management of her households. "It is as bad as having to rule a kingdom," she complained. "I couldn't possibly do the work myself. Would you, the Church, be able to help me—do the work for me?"

Father Macdonald told her Yes. More questions followed from her, and were answered in a manner that brought her relief, and then Father Macdonald, who was undoubtedly a sincere man, did his best to make her realise the importance of the step she was about to take; bade her drive all worldly thoughts from her mind, and gave her a list of books to read. Another interview was arranged for the morrow; and

a few minutes later Sir Ralph Vancelour knocked at the door and was admitted. He undertook to call at Newark House in answer to the widow's request, and then her ladyship quitted the room and was escorted to the street door by Father Macdonald.

CHAPTER IX

The Rupture

At eight o'clock in the evening of the same day Eva and the Marchioness, Lady Braintree and Miss Norris were in the French room, awaiting the announcement of dinner. Lady Newark's face bore marks of distress and she avoided the eyes of her companions, but these signs, though duly marked by Lady Braintree and Miss Norris, escaped Eva's observation. The girl was still feeling that sense of relief that had come over when she decided to abandon further thought of the Roman Church, forget the past, and emerge from her retirement. She enjoyed the consciousness that she and her companions were in such a beautiful room and dressed in such handsome toilettes, that their meal would be served in the great Georgian dining-room with all the pomp and ceremony of a formal dinner party; that as to-day so on other days, and at Tanworth and Cottesley as well as in Newark House, they lived in such stately fashion.

When dinner was announced, she bowed to her sister-in-law, who thereupon stepped forward, and followed by the girl passed out of the room, Lady Braintree and Miss Norris bringing up the rear. They had some distance to go before reaching the

dining-room, to descend two flights of stairs and cross two landings, and their procession was slow, each measuring her steps.

"How pompous and absurd this is," thought Miss Norris. "I wonder whether we are performing this solemn march for the last time"; and bending forward to Lady Braintree she whispered: "There'll be a scene this evening unless I am mistaken. Lady Newark is bracing herself up for it."

The gorgeous Empire plate was displayed as usual upon the dining table; the menu was as long as that at a city banquet; and three men besides the butler were in attendance. As has been said, Eva's chief object in conducting the household in so luxurious a fashion was to imbue the Marchioness with a sense of her position, but she had another object, and that was to gratify her own taste for the magnificent. The vulgar wish to make an impression upon strangers or friends was, on the other hand, quite foreign to her nature, and Mortimer declared that in the old days when her father was alive she used to dress more sumptuously when she was to be alone or with her relations than when she was to go into society.

She was not above discussing the menu with her sister-in-law, and when a particularly recherché dish was handed round she pressed it upon her. "You must! You must indeed!" said she. "I ordered it for you"; and Lady Newark yielded, ate a morsel, but did not like it, for she had not a dainty palate. "Ah, you see I know your tastes," said Eva, and in spite of the little lady's protests she again pressed the

dish upon her, so that the Marchioness made the chief part of her meal off that entrée, which was indeed the choicest thing in the menu, though she happened not to like it. The other ladies were not Marchionesses and were allowed to eat what they liked.

When the servants had placed the dessert upon the table and retired, Eva told the other ladies that she had changed her plans and that livelier times were in store for them. "That is if you wish it, my little sister," she hastened to add. "We have been so so happy, but I do not think it advisable that we should always live so quietly. Our time of mourning is over and we must now have a little gaiety. We will begin by entertaining my aunt and my uncles and their intimate friends, who are so anxious to resume relations with me and be presented to you. We will invite them here to dinner, and when the season is over ask them to Tanworth. We will make them very comfortable, I think; we will show them how well women can manage for themselves. Then later on we will have a large house-party at Tanworth for the shooting. My uncle, Percy, and my cousin, Alec, are first-rate shots and will never remain at a place where the shooting is not good, but the coverts at Tanworth are plentifully stocked. Upon my word I think that you and I should be satisfied with ourselves, my little sister! I am told that people are so curious about us, so anxious to know you, so anxious to welcome me back among them!"

Lady Braintree and Miss Norris were exasperated

with the girl for her lack of perception. Lady Newark's face wore a hard-set look, she had not spoken a word during dinner, when addressed she merely nodded or shook her head; it was quite obvious that she was bracing her nerves for a scene. However, she obeyed Eva's signal to her to rise, and led the way back again to the French room.

Upon entering this apartment a spirit of restlessness took possession of Eva, and she walked about the spacious room, filling it, so to speak, with her majestic presence. Perhaps she felt this, for in her recoil from her nunlike mood she was "letting herself go," recalling the glories of the past, anticipating the glories of the future, vibrating with joy and pride.

Lady Braintree and Miss Norris had no great affection for her, though she had been very kind and generous to them, but they were anxious that so superb a creature should be saved from humiliation. They therefore made themselves pleasant to the Marchioness, who had the power and they feared the intention of striking the girl to the dust; they flattered her and did their utmost to drive the hard-set look away from her face. But they were not successful. "No, no," she muttered like a petulant child, and she fixed her eyes upon the door, so that her companions guessed that she had invited some one to come to her that evening to help her in her encounter with her sister-in-law.

"Sir Ralph Vancelour," announced the servant in a voice so loud that Eva halted and directed an angry glance at the speaker. Sir Ralph Vancelour! Sir

Ralph Vancelour! Why, she had given orders that that impertinent man was not to be admitted into the house! Her attention was drawn the next moment to Lady Newark, who rose, moved quickly, almost ran towards the Baronet, shook his hand, looked up into his face, and thanked him warmly, effusively, for calling. She spoke excitedly, her manner was almost hysterical; it was as though she were welcoming a deliverer, a man come to extricate her from some peril. And Sir Ralph seemed prepared for this reception; he looked down upon her with sympathy and pity, and then glancing at Eva he bowed. Simultaneously Lady Newark turned and beheld her sister-in-law, and an exclamation of fear escaped her. For a moment Eva's aspect was a little threatening, and the two onlookers, Lady Braintree and Miss Norris, feared that in her anger she would be discourteous to the guest. Their fears were well grounded; after the absurd exhibition she had just witnessed Eva was determined that the acquaintance between this man and her sister-in-law should cease. She bade him be seated and in a gesture indicated a chair to Lady Newark; she herself remained standing opposite to the Baronet, her expression demanding that he should explain the object of his visit. Now this was unwarrantable conduct on her part; this attempt to cow the visitor, her sister-in-law's guest, was quite unworthy of her. And it failed; Sir Ralph remained perfectly cool and instantly spoke to the point. "You are aware that Lady Newark intends to join the Catholic Church?" said he.

"One of the priests of St. Peter's Church has sent you with a message for Lady Newark?" asked Eva, taking a seat and obstructing the Baronet's view of the Marchioness.

"No," he replied, "but I intend to help Lady Newark."

"To help her!" exclaimed Eva. "You surely know that it is very unusual for a stranger to thrust himself between a lady and the members of her family. I thought—I had to think—that a priest had sent you with a message; I could not have imagined that you would come here upon your own responsibility to discuss with her such a private matter as her religious convictions. However, we thank you for your offer to help us, though of course we cannot avail ourselves of it." Saying which she rose from her seat with the intention of ringing the bell; but before she reached it a servant entered and announced Lady Caterham.

Eva lost her presence of mind. She perceived the figure of the Baronet bending over Lady Newark, and Lady Braintree and Miss Norris standing rigid, not knowing what to do nor where to look, keenly alive to the embarrassment of the moment. Then the scene swam before her eyes, and she felt that the situation had escaped from her control. On catching sight of the well-remembered figure of her aunt, however, she recovered herself and greeted the newcomer affectionately though not effusively, Lady Caterham responding in the same manner, so that no one would have imagined that they had last parted in anger.

Lady Caterham was of the same type as Eva, but smaller and thinner; she still bore traces of great beauty, but she looked a woman who had been everywhere, seen everything, and exhausted her capacity of enjoyment. There was a worn look in her dark eyes, as though they had constantly been exposed to a dazzling light, and a hard look about her face, in spite of the fact that it wore a smile as a rule—a set smile in which there was no merriment. She bore herself with grace, however, and was certainly an elegant woman. After turning from Eva she glanced, not at the other persons in the room, but at the room itself, which no doubt awoke memories in her. Then "I'm forgetting," said she. "My dear niece," and she gave Eva her hand, and the girl led her forward to the others. Her eyes glanced at Lady Braintree without interest, and she nodded a little curtly; passed Miss Norris quickly, as though she were not of much account; remained a short while on the Baronet, whose proximity to the little lady who remained seated seemed to surprise her; and then fixed themselves upon the Marchioness in an intent and searching gaze. So that was Tanworth's widow! But why didn't she look up? Eva spoke to her, but she made no response, no movement, gave no sign that she understood what was happening. Eva repeated, "My aunt, Lady Caterham. My little sister, Lady Newark"; but the latter's eyes remained fixed upon her lap; she might have been deaf, dumb, and blind. "Are you ill, my little sister?" asked Eva, bending towards her and speaking gently.

"This is my aunt whom I told you about. Do welcome her, my dear! Do look up! Would you sooner that she came at another time? Do tell me! Do look up!" The girl waited a few seconds, and then straightened her figure, her breast heaving convulsively, her face betraying her agony.

When she had somewhat recovered from her astonishment Lady Caterham stepped forward and gently and kindly put her hand upon the Marchioness's arm. "Are you ill, my dear—Mary? Don't you wish to know me? I gathered from my dear niece that you wished to see me, but——"

The Marchioness pushed the hand from off her arm like a vulgar school-girl, and Lady Caterham started upright and looked at her niece. Eva emitted a painful little cry and, drawing near to Lady Braintree and Miss Norris, said in an agonised whisper, "Go, go, please go!" They complied with the request, and in a glance at Sir Ralph Eva bade him also go; but he met her eyes with an obstinate look and stood his ground.

At length the Marchioness spoke. "You should have come before, Lady Caterham," said she, without looking up. "It is too late now. Eva and I must part; either she or I must go. I cannot go on living as I have lived since Tanworth's death; I would sooner die. I dare not do what I want to do, nor say what I want to say, nor think what I want to think. Eva is always watching me, and Lady Braintree and Miss Norris are spies. I am unhappy, miserable! Eva means to be kind, but she doesn't understand me.

I can't do what she wants me to do, nor be what she wants me to be; I can't, really, really I can't! I have tried, I have really, but it's no use! And she isn't fair to me; really, really she isn't! She will be angry with me for having gone to Father Macdonald to-day; she was angry with me for inviting Sir Ralph here. She says I haven't any religious convictions, but it isn't true. I went to Father Macdonald because I hadn't anyone else to go to; I thought he might help me and he has helped me. And I'm going to him again to-morrow whatever Eva may say, for he's a good man and understands me, and he's ready and willing to help me. I'm not nearly so bad as Eva thinks. I don't want to do anything wrong; I never did want to do anything wrong. Of course you don't understand, Lady Caterham——"

"The fact is, that Lady Newark is not allowed to obey the voice of her own conscience," interrupted Sir Ralph.

Lady Caterham glared at him. "Who—who is this —this person?" she asked Eva.

"Of course you'll consider my conduct very unusual," said he.

"Unusual!" cried Lady Caterham. "It is unwarrantable and impertinent to a degree!"

"Naturally you think so," said Sir Ralph, not in the least abashed. "It is no pleasant task for me to have to defend a lady, who is almost a stranger to me, against the tyranny of one of her own people. Lady Newark asked me to come here, and I came as a matter of duty. Evidently you don't understand the

situation. The fact is that Lady Newark wishes to join the Catholic Church, but dares not do so for fear of Lady Eva Fitzgower."

"You see, you see, Lady Caterham. You see, Eva!" cried the Marchioness. "I must do what I think right. And you know, Eva, that you yourself thought of becoming a Catholic once. You must admit that!"

"There has evidently been a misunderstanding," said Lady Caterham. "My niece would not dream of interfering with your freedom or your religious opinions. . . . I am sure that you do not wish to cause us pain by prolonging the attendance of this—this person?"

"No, no," said the miserable woman, whereupon Sir Ralph bowed to her, and walked towards the door.

Lady Newark's eyes followed him, then flashed a terrified glance at the two ladies, who were unable to prevent the scorn from appearing upon their faces, and then she rose to her feet and fled out of the room.

Eva sank into a chair, completely beaten, unable to speak. Lady Caterham remained standing, trying to collect her wits, to understand what had happened. Suddenly a sob shook her. "Eva, O Eva, this is terrible!" she cried. "And in this room, too! Ah, my poor brother—thank God he died before Tanworth's degradation and that other awful event! But Eva, Eva, do you understand what this woman said? Do you realise your position? You are an unwelcome guest and I am an intruder. A servant

may enter at any moment with orders to show us the door. How has it happened? how could you have placed yourself in such a terribly undignified position? You have thrust yourself upon the hospitality of this woman, and she resents it. She seeks out a young man, who admits that he is almost a stranger to her, and asks him here to protect her against you. You owe her an apology. You must leave this house at once. Don't think that I am any longer angry with you, my poor niece. I sympathise with you. I know what your feelings must be. I take it that this scene has been sprung upon you, that you were quite unprepared for this woman's outbreak, that you have been living in a fool's paradise." Here the speaker changed her tone. "I cannot congratulate you upon the results of your management," said she. "But of course you will continue to go your own way and to oppose me and the other members of your family."

At that Eva rose and put her hand upon the older lady's arm. "You do not want to prolong my agony," she said. "At this moment you will not taunt me and cast in my teeth the mistakes I have made in the past. You will think of all the suffering I have endured, and pity me."

Lady Caterham was moved by this appeal and by her niece's tragic look. "My house is open to you," said she. "I have always wished to have you with me, Eva. Come to me. Come the moment you can."

"Yes," said the other. "Yes, I will come to you. Thank you, thank you!"

Shortly after this a servant entered to say that

Lady Caterham's carriage was below, and the aunt and niece parted.

Half-an-hour later Eva was in her bed-room, meditating upon the recently enacted scene. She could not understand what had brought it about, why her sister-in-law had behaved as she had done; she recalled her words, her complaints that she was unhappy, that she had been unjustly treated. But it was impossible that the woman really thought or felt that; over and over again, several times a day, she had expressed her indebtedness to Eva, embraced her, signified her approval of her plans. She was certainly a very treacherous person, she was indeed beneath contempt, and Eva would never forgive her. The girl regretted that she would have to see her again, and determined to take the first opportunity of quitting her roof and breaking off all relations with her. She bestowed not a thought upon the consequences to herself of the rupture, upon the great reduction of her power and importance that it would bring about; her energy was employed in casting about in her mind for an explanation of the Marchioness' conduct. It was not long before one occurred to her, and the more she thought of it the more convinced she was that it was the true one.

It was absurd to think that her sister-in-law had nourished feelings of enmity against her all these months; not a disagreeable word had passed between them till after the widow's secret interview with Sir Ralph Vancelour. He, and after him Father Macdonald, had persuaded her that she was unhappy and

egged her on to this quarrel, with the intention of annexing her to Rome and at the same time of punishing Eva herself for her refractory attitude towards that power. The Baronet, Father Macdonald, Monsignor Vancelour, nay perhaps even the organist were in league to bring about those results; and she saw in their endeavours a good illustration of the way Rome works, her craft, her subtlety, her wonderful organisation. But she would do justice to that power; her chief aim was not to gain material possessions but to win and subdue personalities, souls, characters, by undermining certain qualities and raising others. In her own case pride was the obstacle; that was her citadel, her refuge, and till Rome had undermined it she was a free woman. Sore, wounded though she was, she experienced a thrill at the thought that she was not yet conquered. Oh that she could deal a retaliatory blow! Oh that she could hit her enemy! Luckily there always had been and were mighty powers banded against Rome!

As thus interpreted, the scene lost its mean and vulgar aspect, and what had appeared a mere woman's quarrel became an act in a momentous drama, whereof the motive was the struggle between herself and Rome, the crafty foe of man's intellect and freedom.

CHAPTER X

Lady Eva Resists the Influence

Several days passed before Eva took up her residence with her aunt in Eaton Square. She had to render an account of her management of Lady Newark's affairs, to make up her books and hand them over, to run down to Tanworth and Cottesley, to meet the chief officials of the widow's households. The sisters-in-law were thrown together during these proceedings and addressed each other as of old, but both felt that the rupture was complete and looked forward to their parting. The services of Miss Norris were dispensed with, Eva no longer needing a companion, and Lady Braintree was sent temporarily to Cottesley with a small staff of servants.

Lady Caterham received her niece kindly and made no references to the past; but Eva found it very difficult to accommodate herself to her new surroundings. She had been accustomed to rule, she had now to obey, or rather to fall in with arrangements not of her own making; she missed the luxuries, the splendour, the grand apartments of Newark House; her aunt's style of living was altogether different from that to which she had grown used. Lady Caterham allowed her to participate in the expenses of the household in Eaton Square, to pay her way, but she

expected her niece to be always at her beck and call. There had never been much sympathy between them, and the widow had changed much for the worse in recent years. When her husband was alive and she was a rich woman Lady Caterham was often instanced as a typical *grande dame*, but her troubles had embittered her, and in these days she was not an agreeable companion. She loved power and loved wealth, and when she had possessed them was a gracious and charming woman. She had been a good wife to Caterham, a dull, plodding, party man (who owed his peerage to her), and a good sister to the great Lord Newark, who was in the habit of consulting her in the management of his department; she had for a while restrained the heterodox tendencies of her second brother, the Bishop of Winton, and prevented her third brother, Colonel Fitzgower, from quitting the army and degenerating into the dandy and scandal-monger he had since become. In her day she was a notable figure, but her day was over, and she was now an embittered, cynical, and prematurely old woman. However she still went everywhere, as the saying is, and her niece had to accompany her; the season was at its height, and the ladies' time was fully occupied in the performance of what the older of them would have called their social duties.

Under such conditions Eva returned to fashionable life. But where was the glamour she remembered? She experienced no excitement, no gaiety even, in the society of her old friends and acquaintances. One

reception resembled another, one dinner-party was the model of the others, the men and women that she met were of a type, quite unexceptionable, refined, but not in the least interesting; the lavish display of wealth, the gathering of the well-dressed crowd failed utterly to impress her. Her senses had been stirred by scenes similar to those that now filled her with ennui, what now seemed dull and commonplace had once shone brightly in her vision: society had not changed; but the fancies and emotions it had stimulated in the débutante had sprung into a great passion; she had loved and the experience had transformed her; her loss in tragic circumstances had again stirred her nature to its depths; and then in magnificent retirement she had fallen gradually under the influence of a masterful idea. Society was hopelessly dull, neither good nor bad, until she regarded it as "the world," as the foe of the Church.

Meanwhile she frequently met her own friend, Mortimer, both in Eaton Square, when he called upon Lady Caterham, and elsewhere. She suspected that her aunt was making use of him as an emissary or ambassador to detect the schemes of the Marchioness or to prepare the way for a reconciliation between her and the members of the family. Eva was surprised that her uncles had not called in Eaton Square since she had taken up her residence there, but she dared not speak of them to Lady Caterham, lest her aunt should remind her of her treatment of them in the past. However, one day in the first week in June Lady Caterham announced that her brothers

were about to pay her a visit, and then launched out into a description of their recent history.

"The Bishop dines with us to-morrow," said she, "and your Uncle Percy will come later in the evening with Alec. I hope that you will observe your uncles, for they are good object-lessons of the absurdities into which the sectarian spirit leads educated men. As you know, my dear niece, our family is on the downward grade; we are determined to make ourselves ridiculous. Over and over again your poor father was on the point of wrecking his career, and even as it was I fear that he did more harm than good to his party. They say that he had too scrupulous a conscience for a cabinet minister; perhaps that is true, and perhaps your Uncle Edward has too scrupulous a conscience for a bishop. You may remember meeting Hood at Tanworth?"

"Oh, yes," said Eva. "Professor Hood, the great historian."

"The great writer, call him. Well, some two years ago the Bishop invited him to Winton, where he remained a month or more. Since then the Bishop has been a changed man. He was a splendid organiser, a great administrator, and the safest bishop on the bench. He is now regarded with horror by what I suppose is the dominant party in the Establishment. His recent pronouncements upon Orders and the Sacramental System have aroused the indignation of the High Church party; he is in trouble with the leading clergy in his diocese; he will not let things be; he will not hold his tongue. Now, dear Edward

is not a philosopher, not an intellectual man; heckled by Father Warp, a sharp young Anglican, in one of the reviews he appealed to science for support of his contentions, whereupon that amiable person, Professor Crewkerne, welcomed him as the High Priest of Agnosticism, but rallied him upon the bitterness of his attack upon Christianity!" Here her ladyship paused to laugh. "You must pardon me, Eva," she went on. "My deár brothers stir my humour. Now, the Bishop has a style, a gorgeous and inaccurate style, full of purple patches; his book 'Paradise' won him fame and money; and he bethought him in an evil hour to write a work upon the 'Foundations of the Faith'—or perhaps it was that he wished to escape from the nickname, 'the High Priest of Agnosticism.' Now your education has been neglected, my poor Eva—you had a way, my dear, of correcting and instructing your teachers or even dismissing them if they proved obstinate—and I fear that you will not appreciate the naïveté of your uncle's advice to Christians harassed by doubt. He advised them to apply themselves to the contemplation of purely physical phenomena, and instanced the case of a New Zealander, who attained to a belief in God by fixing his gaze upon the blue dome of heaven. The story was of course mercilessly ridiculed, and won for your uncle another nickname. He is now popularly known as 'the Great Blue-domer!' His wife and son have seceded to Rome——"

"Ah, then that report was true?" asked Eva.

"Yes; Monsignor Vancelour received them. That

interests you? But let me finish. My brother is now a broken-hearted man, his domestic peace is wrecked, and he is the most unpopular prelate in the kingdom. It would seem," continued the speaker in an exasperating tone, "that the Roman Church was appointed by fate to compass the degradation of our family——"

"Why do you speak in that tone, my aunt?" cried Eva with warmth. "Do you take pleasure in our misfortunes?"

"I take pleasure in nothing," replied the bitter woman. "I am merely giving you the history of the family since you chose to cast us off. Well, your Uncle Percy quitted the army some time ago. It would seem that he had at length identified the creature at the Vatican as the chief enemy of Britain. The Pope has devised a plot for the enslavement of the English race, and it is Percy's office to get at close quarters with the Scarlet Lady and inform his countrymen of her abominations. Percy is not nice, my love. We must avoid him. And yet I don't know that we need do so; he is quite harmless and extremely amusing. In my old age I have acquired a taste for caricature, and my dear brother is a caricature. He writes for the *Anti-Papist* and has helped to found the Anti-Papal League; occasionally he goes on the stump. Major Gatling is with him, and Vincent, admiral of the fleet, both retired; and to see these grey-headed warriors together and to hear them talk is the chief amusement of my old age. Ah, they can a tale unfold of Rome!"

Eva was silent for a while. At length she said: "I

have not liked to ask you before; has my little—has Tanworth's widow seceded to Rome?"

"Oh, dear me, yes, and is completely in the hands of the priests."

"Have you called upon her since—since——"

"Yes, several times. The Bishop has also called."

"He is more anxious to see her than me?"

Lady Caterham shrugged her shoulders. "It is his duty to bring her back to the Establishment."

"Do you think he will do so?"

"No, but I think I shall; at any rate I shall try to, but not at present. You may rest assured, my niece, that I shall not allow her to remain under the power of the priests if I can help it. But Catholic priests are very clever men, and when they have gained a footing in a household it is not easy to dislodge them."

Eva sought her room and pondered what her aunt had told her. So her kinsfolk were engaged in the same contest as herself; the Bishop, her Uncle Percy, and her aunt were all in their several ways at war with Rome.

CHAPTER XI

The Bishop of Winton and Colonel Fitzgower

The Bishop of Winton was regarded by his brother bishops as the *enfant terrible* of the Establishment. He was a Protestant and called himself one; he held in horror the Mass, Sacerdotalism, everything that savoured of Rome; and his arbitrary methods, aversion from compromise, and want of tact had made him unpopular, not only with the High Church party but even with moderate churchmen. For all that he was a conscientious and thoroughly good man. Till he had come under the influence of Professor Hood, his career had been very successful, for he was a good organiser and administrator; but that eminent writer and extremely inaccurate historian had aroused his latent dread of Sacerdotalism and urged him to take up the cudgels on behalf of the strongly Protestant section of the Church. And his propaganda was a failure. He did more harm than good to his party; his ideas were old-fashioned, his dialectic was childish. The clever young Anglican "fathers" in his diocese, whom he was constantly harassing, retaliated upon him, drove his arguments home for him, and covered him with ridicule. He held bravely to his course, however, until his wife and only son seceded to Rome; and he was reeling from these staggering blows when Eva saw him in her aunt's house in Eaton Square.

The girl was not a little anxious as to the reception he would give her after her arbitrary behaviour towards him in the past year; and she felt grateful when he came forward and greeted her as though their relations had never been disturbed. They met in the Red drawing-room, a long, narrow apartment hung with red damask and lofty, narrow mirrors, and lit by gas in crystal chandeliers, and Eva and her aunt were dressed for dinner in black velvet. After the introductory salutes the Bishop said, "we have suffered much of late, my niece, and are in need of one another's sympathy. But—." He paused and glanced at his sister. "Oh, Eva will feel sympathy with you, I am sure," she said.

"I should have liked you to come to me to the Palace," said he to Eva, "but I have no wife now. My wife and I are living apart, I mean. She is not happy out of London now; she is attached to a Romish chapel and attends it daily. But I understand from Tanworth's widow that you are friendly with Mr. Vancelour—I mean the priest."

"I am not friendly with him," said Eva.

"Ah, you are not?" said he with relief. "Then I may tell you that he has robbed me of my wife. Hood warned me against the man: he told me plainly that Vancelour would get hold of my poor wife. Those were his very words. 'You must hate these Romish priests as I do,' he added."

"That is a characteristic utterance of Professor Hood's," said Lady Caterham, who as usual was snappish and disagreeable when in the presence of

her brother. "He often told me that the priests would get hold of me; he says it to every woman he comes across, and it's extremely silly and offensive. He was grossly impertinent to one of the Norbert girls at Tanworth, and our brother had to apologise to the Duke of Thanet."

"Ah, poor Hood!" sighed the Bishop. "He is the most unhappy man I have ever known—he, the most upright, the most robust and stimulating of moral teachers. And you see he was right, my sister; these priests do get hold of the women, ay, and of the men too. For of course you know that my wretched son has been ensnared?" said he, turning to Eva. "Arthur a papist! You knew him well," he turned to Lady Caterham. "Did he strike you as being morbid or effeminate? He was an English gentleman, a soldier; he never discussed religion with me, nor books, nor theories of any sort; his talk was of hunting and shooting and cricket and matters connected with his profession. As you know, when in London he stopped with our brother—not a man inclined to Romanism!" added the Bishop with a bitter laugh.

"And you encouraged Arthur's intimacy with our brother?" asked Lady Caterham in a sarcastic tone.

"Very naturally," said the Bishop with surprise. "Both were soldiers. Percy has been a great soldier in his time, and I thought that he would sustain Arthur's enthusiasm for his profession. They had many interests in common; both were sportsmen; and I wanted my son to make the acquaintance of

men who had already distinguished themselves in the service. I was particularly anxious that he should be kept free from morbid, effeminate, and unhealthy influences. I discouraged him from reading modern literature—for the classics he had no taste. I wanted him to be a typical English soldier."

"But why cannot he be that and a Roman Catholic?" asked Eva.

"He has sent in his papers and talks about becoming a Jesuit. I have found it useless to argue or remonstrate with him. Poor boy! he was an easy prey; knowing little or nothing about theology, he of course succumbed to Mr. Vancelour. That is the way with Romish priests; as Hood says, they get hold of the women and the young men."

"Arthur is five-and-twenty," put in Eva. "And he must have gone to Monsignor Vancelour."

"You don't understand the ways of Romish priests!"

"But I happen to know this priest a little."

"Newark invited him to Tanworth two or three times," explained Lady Caterham. "He is the uncle of Sir Ralph, who was with Tanworth's widow when we called upon her."

"Yes, yes, of course," said the Bishop, "and that reminds me that I called again upon her yesterday. But I was told that a Mr. Macdonald was with her, so I gave in my name and came away."

Lady Caterham frowned. "Oh, why didn't you see her in the presence of the priest?" she cried. "The woman is a miserable coward. She was terri-

bly afraid of Eva, who coerced her and bullied her and——"

"Oh no, no, my aunt," the girl remonstrated. "I was not so unkind as that. She never gave me any indication that she was unhappy; she was most affectionate and always thanking me for what I did for her."

"So far as I understand, she sought the aid of the Romish Church against you," said the Bishop. "Who first put the idea of Rome into her head?"

Eva winced. "I am afraid that I did," she said.

"Then you have no reason to thank the Romish Church," said he.

"On the contrary, I have every reason to detest it."

"And do you detest it?"

"I *did* not."

The Bishop threw a searching glance at her and was about to question her, when Lady Caterham interposed: "If you had seen Tanworth's widow in the presence of Father Macdonald and had outstayed him you might have brought her back to her proper church. As it is she'll think you are afraid of facing a priest."

"I cannot meet priests just at present, my dear sister," said he meekly. "They have robbed me of my wife and son, and I might say things to them that I should afterwards regret. But I want to know how far the acquaintance between Eva and Mr. Vancelour has gone. Have you ever seen him alone, my niece?"

"I don't think we need trouble Eva by talking about the Roman Church," interposed Lady Cater-

ham. "She may have been attracted by it once, but she has long ceased to think any more about it. She and Tanworth's widow were much alone and got into a morbid, unhealthy state of mind. Now that Eva has taken her proper place in the world and is fulfilling her duties, she has no time to waste on idle fancies."

But the Bishop would not allow the matter to drop. "My poor wife and son are lost finally," said he, "and the same may be the case with Tanworth's widow. We may be in time to save Eva. Did you have an interview with Mr. Vancelour?"

"Yes."

"Then of course you are a Romanist?"

"Oh, no."

"Perhaps you had better tell us what happened at the interview," said Lady Caterham.

"Dear aunt, the subject is a painful one to me. I —I asked him to receive me into the Catholic Church——"

"Asked him to receive you into the Romish Church?" cried the Bishop. "Then of course he did so?"

"N—o, n—o," stammered Eva. "He would not receive me into the Church."

"I am not surprised," Lady Caterham was so unkind as to say. "I must ask you to pardon me if I hurt your feelings, Eva, but Monsignor Vancelour is probably, like most Catholic priests, a very clever fellow, and no doubt he realised at once that you would be a source of infinite trouble to him. And

Eva, my poor Eva, you are not worth the trouble you would give him! Now Lady Newark—she's different. She's very rich, to begin with."

"I cannot accept your explanation," said the Bishop. "The Romish priests are only too ready to *convert* people."

"Perhaps he thought that I was not in the proper disposition to join the Church," Eva suggested.

"Ah!" ejaculated the Bishop, and rising from his seat he paced the room. "Ah, now I understand! He was right, Eva, the man was right; you *are* not in the proper disposition to join the Romish Church. If you became a Romanist to-morrow, the next day you would turn Anglican again. You must be broken in! You must be broken in! Your character must be undermined! I wish that you could see my poor misguided son. He goes about like a man with a weight upon his shoulders, he speaks in a low tone of voice, he never smiles; and he was once a Guardsman!"

The Bishop paced the room in silence for a while, his eyes opening and shutting, for he was almost reduced to tears. "My wife and I cannot live together now," he resumed. "She must attend Mass daily, confide her most intimate secrets to this man, and do his bidding; while I am not allowed to remonstrate with her or argue with her or even advise her. *She* has been broken in! Poor, sweet, gentle-minded Mildred! She who is almost incapable of sin regards herself as a sinful woman, weeps when she prays, I hear, and is trying to form herself upon the

model of an hysterical and diseased nun. She is reading that demoralising and detestable book of Caroline Norbert's. They have both left me! I have no wife and no son!"

There was genuine pathos in these words, and the tone and expression of the man were most impressive.

The girl ran to her uncle. "Oh, I didn't know of this!" she cried. "I didn't really, or I should never have been so unkind! Dear uncle, can you forgive me? If I had thought that you were in trouble I should have come to you at once. How horrible that I should have behaved so badly to you!"

The Bishop looked at her with a sad smile. "My dearest niece, it is not your fault that my wife and son have left me," said he.

"Oh no! And yet—but they'll come back; they will get over this—this infatuation for Romanism. You know, I do, I *do* detest the Romish Church!"

At length Lady Caterham managed to change the subject, and at dinner the conversation fell upon the old days when the Great Lord Newark was alive and all the members of the family were prosperous and happy. The Bishop adopted a more cheerful tone, and pleased and touched his niece by referring to the pride his brother had taken in her. After dinner he asked her to sing to him, and she complied with the request. Shortly after ten o'clock he took his leave.

The Bishop of Winton was a man deserving of sympathy; his brother, Colonel the Hon. Percy Fitzgower, was a laughing-stock. Once a gallant soldier, he was now a farcical person, the embodiment of a ridiculous

type. He had long legs, one of them gouty, and a military bearing, and a huge iron-grey moustache. He was gallant to young women and called them "My dear"; older women he addressed as "Ma'am"; and he had a hectoring, bullying, or boisterously familiar way with men. "Rome" was his theme. Wags prompted him. "Rome," said they, and he would repeat the word, tug fiercely at his moustache, and unfold a tale. If only men were present and he was backed up by his friend Vincent, the tale would be very shocking. It would begin thus; "When we were in Naples—eh, Vincent!" or "When we were in Paris—eh, Vincent!" Priests and nuns were the chief characters. He had an anecdote about the Vatican, the point of which most people missed. They thought that it was meant to illustrate the facts that Pope Pius IX was a benevolent old gentleman and Colonel Fitzgower an unmitigated cad; but that was a tale for polite ears. The Colonel preferred plain-speaking, but though he had a taste for the foul he was willing to respect the prejudices of people and was not always disgusting. He could be solemn and mysterious, and was so in his letters to *The Times* and in his contributions to the Reviews, for his work was accepted by high-class periodicals on account of his gallant past, his illustrious name, his curious style, and the amusement he afforded. But many people took him seriously, and his tracts and magazine, *The Anti-Papist*, were read eagerly and his speeches gravely listened to by that still large class of English people who regard the Catholic Church as the masterpiece of

Satan. The Ritualists and High Church Anglicans were of course "Jesuits in disguise," and he attacked them with great violence; indeed the most shameful and libelous of his productions was directed at a highly revered prelate of the Established Church. It would seem, however, that Anglicans and Roman Catholics had shaken hands over the matter of Colonel Fitzgower, and agreed to ignore him. To most people he was a joke, an institution, a man to be encouraged in these dull and solemn days. Occasionally he had an ex-priest or an escaped nun for exhibition; but though the immorality of priests and nuns was one of his chief counts against Rome, it must not be supposed that he was a milksop. Boys must be boys but priests must not, according to this moralist; and he and his friend Vincent were boys, and proclaimed the fact when the port was in them. At such times his anecdotes began as usual with, "When we were in Paris—eh, Vincent!" or "When we were in Vienna—eh, Vincent!" but the heroes thereof were himself and his friend. Port warmed the old boy's heart and caused him to forget his enmity to Rome and to feel generously disposed towards all mankind. "Go all of you to Paris, to Naples, to Vienna, or wherever there's any fun to be had. I'm not the boy to say you no—eh, Vincent!" expressed the sentiment of Colonel Fitzgower when under the influence of wine.

On his way to Lady Caterham's house he looked in at Boodle's Club for his nephew Alec, and they proceeded in the direction of Eaton Square. Alec Fitz-

gower was a handsome young fellow of eight-and-twenty, six feet four in height, and of prodigious strength; he owned a racing stable with the notorious Mrs. Wimpole, and despite his weight was one of the best riders across country in England. The conversation of the uncle and nephew dealt at first with the rupture between Eva and Lady Newark, whom they and the other members of the family always referred to as Tanworth's widow, and then with Lady Caterham's hopes of extricating the Marchioness from the hands of the priests. They spoke unsympathetically of Eva, whom they described as never having been "broken in," and who therefore would never "go straight," and incidentally betrayed a low opinion of the sex. They knew how to enter a drawing-room, however, and having saluted their hostess they addressed themselves to Eva with a very pretty grace, expressing themselves as at her service.

Each had a horse that would exactly suit her, and hoped that she would ride it when in town; each had a programme of amusements for her to choose from and entered into friendly rivalry with the other for the disposal of her time. Lady Caterham was of course included in these invitations, only one or two of which were accepted; and society and sport were discussed till Eva rose and said "Good-night."

Upon the departure of the girl Lady Caterham asked her brother and nephew if they had received cards for Lady Newark's reception. They replied that they had, and then she asked them if they had accepted.

"Not I," said the Colonel. "The place will be packed with the members of the old Papist families."

"Well, perhaps you're right," interrupted his sister. "They would probably give you the cold shoulder. But you must go, Alec. I have been seeing Frank Mortimer and have gathered from him the circumstances that led to the quarrel between that woman and Eva. My niece is a most extraordinary person. I admire her greatly. I cannot help it, badly as she has behaved to us. She treated Tanworth's widow like a child, dispossessed her of her rights, imposed her will upon her, and took it for granted that what was pleasing to herself would be pleasing to her. It is a most curious story. The important point is that the widow's object in seeking the priest—Father Macdonald—was to secure him as an ally against Eva. Yes, really," said Lady Caterham, on observing the incredulous looks of her companions. "The woman submitted to my dear niece's tyranny till flesh and blood could stand it no longer, and then flew for relief to the first man she came across, Sir Ralph Vancelour, and he handed her over to the priest. Of course Father Macdonald secured her for his church. But she will soon tire of him and Romanism——"

"No, no," said the Colonel, rising from his chair. "The priests have got hold of her and they'll not let her go. You don't know them as well as I do. But you wait, you wait," said he impressively, and he began to pace the room, spluttering exclamations under his breath, and tugging at his moustache.

Lady Caterham and her nephew exchanged a smile.

"He'll begin in a minute," whispered the young man. "He's been worse than ever of late. Sh!"

"Of course Thanet and Dartmoor and the rest of the crew will try to hush it up," said the Colonel, walking up and down and addressing space. "They'll try to make out that it's only a trifling dispute about church music or some detail of diocesan management. Perhaps old Grimsby will fan such rumours, but for all that Vancelour will have to go—he'll be packed off. Old Grimsby's no fool; he'll get his way with the Vatican creature. 'Father John does not care for Gregorian music,' I can hear them say it; but that's not good enough for us—eh, Vincent? *Cherchez la femme*, old man. Grimsby didn't attach Macdonald to St. Peter's for nothing. He and Macdonald are of the same kidney, fire and brimstone chaps. . . . No, no, Gatling, it won't do, old man! Grimsby's past it. Now Vancelour—he's different, but he's my bird. Yours is a wilier bird, and you'll have to snare him. Talking of Grimsby, I met him the other day and said to him, 'Will you or will you not meet me on the platform next Thursday?' Of course he declined, of course! So I said, 'Then with all due respect, your Eminence, I must conclude that you fear I should reduce you to silence.' And he said—can't I hear his thin penetrating voice—'Oh, I have no doubt that you could bray me down!'"

("Alec, I fancy that that is a true anecdote," whispered Lady Caterham. "I seem to recognise the Cardinal's note.")

"Catch any of 'em standing up and fighting like

men," pursued the Colonel. "But it won't do, Gatling. Grimsby is far too——. Ahem! About thirty years ago Vincent and I were at the Vatican, and saw the fat old Pope. He was smiling at a parcel of women —fine women, doocid fine! Vincent admires those black-eyed Roman women, and I never shall forget——. Let me think. . . . Oh, yes, the idea was that we should dress up as priests and peep behind the scenes a bit. It was Vincent's idea. Well, we did so, and what happened, if you please? Why, simply this: that on presenting ourselves at the Vatican some fellows crept behind us and we were seized and locked up for the night. That's the way the animal was allowed to treat British officers! But that happened afterwards. Well, down they all went on their knees —all except Vincent and your humble servant. The Pope looked at me and I could see him tremble; then he began to bless the crew. When he came to me he asked me why I didn't kneel. 'I kneel to no man,' said I. There was silence and then he said, 'Well the blessing of a poor old man will do you no harm!' And then he did it, blessed me! Never till my death shall I forget that! I allowed him to bless me, when I might have whipped him off his pins before you could say 'knife.'"

("Alec, he's rather dull to-day," whispered Lady Caterham.)

"But no. Grimsby's one type of the animal, Vancelour's t'other. Grimsby wants his clergy to be tame brutes. Not they! Not Vancelour, at all events. 'Cardinal Grimsby dislikes the elaborate and florid

music performed at St. Peter's Church.' Pooh! Fiddlesticks! 'Cardinal Grimsby considers *Catholicism: the Religion of the Heart*'—Religion of the Heart—good that!—'unorthodox.' Will that do, Vincent? 'Cardinal Grimsby is jealous of Monsignor Vancelour and anxious to remove him; he wants to strike a blow at the old Catholic families.' Gammon! It's the women, old man! It always is the women! The d——d jades!"

At this Lady Caterham rose to her feet in anger, or assumed anger, and said, "Take him away, Alec," whereupon the Colonel stopped suddenly, looked at the pair in astonishment, and coloured.

"I—I beg pardon, my sister" said he. "I was wandering. I forgot where I was. I am so sorry."

Lady Caterham smiled and gave him her hand, and the next minute he took his departure with a very shamefaced air.

"He's quite sane except on that subject," Alec assured his aunt. "But he and his friends will get into hot water if they are not more careful. They've engaged a man named Balsam to edit their journals and have established him in a shop in Cheapside. He's a horrible little animal. He has set private inquiry agents to watch some of the prominent Catholic priests, Cardinal Grimsby and Monsignor Vancelour among others. But the real danger comes from Major Gatling, who I think must be a monomaniac. He declares he has proof that——"

"Well?"

"You must pardon me, my aunt—proof that Cardinal Grimsby keeps a harem!"

Lady Caterham burst into laughter.

"But he really believes it, and he is going 'to spring a mine under Grimsby's feet'—his own words—one of these days. Uncle Percy and Vincent would like to fight shy of him—he's a little too idiotic even for them!—but he has spent a heap of money upon the League and is the proprietor of *The Anti-Papist* and landlord of the shop and office where they have established this man Balsam. Balsam is no fool; and I shouldn't be surprised if he got the whole business into his own hands when he has wheedled the old military fellows out of their money."

"Really. And how about your own affairs—your two-year olds?"

"Don't! Don't! Never you own a racing stable with a member of the opposite sex!"

"That I most assuredly shall not," said Lady Caterham; and the next minute the aunt and nephew parted.

CHAPTER XII

ERNEST DE KERAMUR'S CHALLENGE

THE month of June brought Eva no interesting experiences. She accompanied her aunt to luncheon parties, afternoon-at-homes, dinner parties, receptions, balls, race meetings; but they failed to entertain her. So handsome a girl could not be overlooked in any assembly, but her manner repelled advances and rendered intimacy impossible. She was mincingly polite, embarrassingly gracious; her face wore a set smile; when addressed she bent her head deferentially, but paid no attention to what her interlocutor said. A sense of the failures and humiliations she had suffered in her attempt to develop her personality had led her to adopt this conventional attitude; she was trying to suppress herself, to be as others were, to be as she would have said an "ordinary person." Experience had taught her that the career of an extraordinary person was beset with trouble to herself and others, and she was following a course that would have been recommended to her by a common-sense moralist.

Her relations with her aunt did not become intimate. After her little burst of confidence, Lady Caterham returned to her uncommunicative habit, and the ladies were for the most part silent in each other's company. Meanwhile Eva learnt from Mortimer that her aunt

was a frequent visitor at Newark House, and that gentleman also told her that the Marchioness was making friends among the Catholic old families through the introduction of the clergy of St. Peter's. For her own part Eva would far sooner not have had to meet her sister-in-law again, but Lady Caterham had made a point of her accepting the latter's invitation to her first reception, and the girl felt that in the future her attitude towards the Marchioness would be determined for her by her aunt.

One afternoon in the first week in June and a couple of days before Lady Newark's reception, the organist, Ernest de Keramur, called in Eaton Square and asked to see Lady Eva. This struck the girl as an unwarrantable proceeding on his part, and she felt inclined to send down a request that he would explain what he wanted of her. She repeated his name, and asked herself, "And who is he, pray?" though she remembered him quite well as the "person who played the organ." After some hesitation, however, she decided to see him, and encountering her aunt on her way downstairs, an impulse prompted her to say, "M. de Keramur has called."

"Indeed. And who is he?" asked Lady Caterham.

"A person who plays the organ," replied Eva a little defiantly; and the next minute she was in the drawing-room and regarding the organist with a look that plainly asked him to explain his business. But before he had time to speak her expression changed. She was conscious, as on the two other occasions she had seen him, of being pleased with his appearance

and bearing, and she smiled and bowed, but did not offer him her hand nor motion him to a seat.

"I want you to come to St. Peter's on Sunday morning," said he, a little chilled by her reception. "We are going to have Beethoven's Mass in C, and I should like you to hear it. I have got the choir completely under my control now and they sing splendidly."

"I am so glad that you have been successful," said she in a conventional tone. "You know Lady Caterham? No?" and she looked surprised.

At this his sensitive face expressed disappointment and for a moment he was at a loss. "I thought it would interest you to hear about the Mass," said he.

"Oh, it does," said she, not enthusiastically.

"And then if you remember you asked me to teach you the organ——"

"I must ask you kindly to forget that suggestion about the lessons," she interrupted. "You see, I do not live so near the church as I used to, and then I am sure that Monsignor Vancelour would not like you to teach me at St. Peter's, as I am not a Roman Catholic."

"Oh, he would not dislike it," said Ernest despondently, for he felt that he could not contend against her manner.

His tone reminded her that she was behaving somewhat ungraciously, and she asked him to take a seat. "As I said, I am not a Catholic and therefore am disinclined to enter a Catholic church. You will understand the feeling, I am sure."

But he didn't understand it. He had met her in a Catholic church, and she had shown her pleasure in

being there and her interest in the building, in the organ, in Monsignor, nay in himself. "You have changed," escaped his lips. "I beg your pardon, I mean you have lost your interest in——" He checked the word "us," substituting, "what once interested you."

Had she admitted that, he could not but have taken a speedy departure; but no one likes to be charged with changeableness. Moreover, the young man's tone betrayed genuine feeling, regret, as he made the suggestion, so that to have accepted it at once would have seemed unkind. "No," said she, seating herself. "I have not lost interest in the Catholic Church. I still think it very very interesting. But—it is a little difficult to explain—I once thought that I might——. However, we were discussing the organ. That is a splendid instrument that you have at St. Peter's."

"Yes," said he, kindling; "and I am so anxious that you should hear it again on Sunday morning."

"Why not at some other time?"

Ernest hesitated a moment before he replied, "I want you to be present at the Mass."

"Ah, I understand! Monsignor Vancelour has——"

"Oh, no," interrupted the young man. "On the contrary, he told me that I had no right to find out your address and call upon you, that it would be an unusual thing to do, that you would regard it as an intrusion; but I told him that he was mistaken. I felt certain that it would interest you to be present at the Mass, that you would be impressed and glad that you had come."

"I see. But surely, M. de Keramur, you realise that you have taken a very unusual step? You say that you want me to be present at the Mass that I might be impressed by it. That must mean that you have come here with the idea of proselytising me."

He did not deny it. "Ah, Lady Eva, I knew that I was taking an unusual course," he cried, "but I had hoped that you would not think of that. I gathered that you were deeply interested in Holy Church and disposed to join us, that you felt the beauty of our services, that you were coming to us for peace of mind and happiness. But something has happened—I do not know what and it would be impertinent of me to inquire—that has made you halt in your approach, and I hoped to draw you on again by my music, to get you to the church, so that you should be present at the Mass."

"You fulfilled what you regarded as your duty?" she asked in a tone which warned him that the idea of dismissing him at once and forever was still hovering in her mind.

"No, I did not regard it in that light," he replied. "You will ridicule me or be offended, I am afraid; but I had foreseen that I should come here and say these things to you. When I felt the impulse I obeyed it; I did what I was appointed to do."

"Really, M. de Keramur, this is most extraordinary! You say the strangest things and I don't know why I listen to them. Are you quite sure that you have not been prompted by the priests without being aware of it?"

At that the young man's face flushed, and he replied with hauteur, "You don't think that."

"It is a very natural supposition," she rejoined, a little irritated that he should take offence so readily. "But I forgot; you have already said that Monsignor Vancelour advised you not to call here. That I suppose was after you had announced to him your intention of calling?"

"Yes."

Here a servant entered saying in rather a loud voice, "Tea is served in her Ladyship's room, my Lady."

This was a critical moment for the young organist, and he glanced quickly at Eva, who hesitated and then said, "Are you in a hurry? No? Then bring the tea here," she addressed the servant.

The man lingered as though he misunderstood her, and Eva bent her brows; she guessed that her aunt had sent him to interrupt her colloquy with the person who played the organ.

When the servant had closed the door behind him, she told Ernest to resume his seat and said with a smile, "Monsignor Vancelour must have been surprised at that announcement?"

"He was," replied Ernest; and then returning her smile, "But I did not think that you would discover——"

"No, no, of course you didn't," she interrupted; "you intended to play the Jesuit."

"Well I am glad that you have seen through the ruse. Indeed I am sorry that I adopted it."

"Oh, it has served you well," said she lightly.

"You could scarcely have explained your purpose when we first met."

"No, I had not the courage."

"Oh, you are not lacking in courage. But if I attend the Mass and am not impressed in the way you wish—what then?"

"That will not happen," he replied in a tone of conviction.

"But surely your prophetic powers may be at fault?"

"You can put them to the test."

"Take up your challenge, as it were?"

"Exactly."

Here the tea was brought in, and while she was pouring him out a cup she observed, "You certainly do not allow the conventions to stand in your way, M. de Keramur?"

"Not when the issues are momentous," he returned gravely.

"Then you think that important consequences may follow from our meeting to-day?"

"I do, and that is my excuse for troubling you. You have made me realise the unusualness of the step I have taken; but—but I cannot think that I have done wrong, given you cause for taking offence. No, no, on the contrary. I mean—— Ah, I cannot explain my meaning, Lady Eva!"

"I quite understand you. You believe that you have been appointed to effect my conversion to the Church of Rome, and you seem to imply that you know a great deal more about me than I know myself. You speak with an air of conviction and are evidently

sincere; at the same time, M. de Keramur, you are very impertinent. No, no, I don't wish you to think that I am dismissing you. After all it is very kind of you to be interested in my spiritual welfare—very kind, and, you must pardon me, extraordinarily impertinent! Really, M. de Keramur, it is absurd that you should be hurt when I say this. Think for a moment how your conduct would appear to a third person, to my aunt, Lady Caterham, for example. I am not angry with you, because I feel that you come to me as a sort of agent of your Church, so to speak, that you bring to me a challenge from her. I will be perfectly frank with you. Were I a Romanist I should applaud your action; even as it is——" She broke off and laughed. "Upon my word, you are so extraordinary that I don't know what to say! I have half a mind to take up the challenge. But we must leave the subject. You have acquitted yourself well —very well!"

She was quite exhilarated, and at this proof of his ability to stir her Ernest's spirits rose. He reminded her of her visit to St. Peter's on the occasion of his first performance on the new organ and of her promise to criticise, and offer suggestions upon, the music at the church.

"I associate you with St. Peter's," he went on; and to her remark that she was not a member of the congregation he bade her look ahead. "We want energy," said he, "enthusiasm, zeal, new blood. You will supply that; you will stir us up!"

"Indeed yours is the stirring spirit," said she.

"Oh, I shall have done something," said he; at which she smiled. "The old Catholics are sleepy; we make no headway; we want a fiery propagandist. I said so to Monsignor, and he smiled and asked me whether I could find one. I said that I could, and we shall see if I was not right."

"I fancy that if I were to become a Romanist I should be a tremendous proselytiser," observed Eva.

"Of course you would—and will be; that is your part."

She shook her head.

"Well, we shall see," and he ran on in this strain till at length she remarked that he knew a great deal more about her than she herself knew, whereupon their eyes met.

"Rome knows how to choose her instruments!" she exclaimed. "You don't object to my putting it in that way?"

"Oh, no, but you must take up my challenge."

"Yes, I shall do that."

Here he rose to take his leave. She gave him her hand, and allowing her eyes to rest upon him was aware of a look of satisfaction, almost of triumph, in his face and a certain air of masterfulness in his bearing. Thereupon a feeling of opposition awoke in her, and when he had taken his departure she wondered at the part she had played in the interview. She had shown a lamentable weakness and confirmed in him the strange belief that he was destined to influence her career. This led her to consider the young man, his presumption, his hauteur, his claim to foreknow-

ledge, his undoubted insight into her character. She was almost inclined to accept his idea that he was commissioned by Providence to interfere in her affairs; and when her aunt inquired about the person with the Breton name, who did something, she had forgotten what, played some musical instrument, and who had remained an unconscionable time, Eva assumed a mysterious air and remarked that the young man was an extraordinary person and had said things to her that she would not soon forget. Lady Caterham frowned and took her to task for granting a long *tête-à-tête* to a young man, an organist, for she now remembered that that was his business; to which Eva returned that she must really be allowed to follow her own judgement in such matters.

On the following morning she rode in the Park upon the huge black mare her cousin Alec had sold to her, and espying Frank Mortimer upon his neat little cob, she cantered up to him and told him about M. de Keramur's visit. Mortimer laughed and advised her to fight shy of the organist, whom he described, jestingly, as a good medium for the transmission of Rome's power.

"Why don't your people take him up?" she asked.

"Why should they?" he asked her in return. "He has his profession to attend to, besides which he doesn't want to be taken up. He's the most exclusive person. No company would be good enough for him. Then he's too critical. He gave me to understand that I was a mere cumberer of the ground. He is better left to his organ-pipes."

"You disappoint me, Mr. Mortimer. I should have expected that you and Sir Ralph Vancelour and M. de Keramur——"

"Why do you bracket us together?"

"You are all Catholics and should have the same object in view."

"What object, may I ask?"

"The spread of your religion."

Mortimer looked at her and laughed. "Surely that's the business of the priests," said he. "By-the-by, Sir Ralph is a bit of a proselytiser. He converted Miss Anastasia Forcy-Smith, and her mother told me that he had made a cruel use of his intellect; but Anastasia reverted to Protestantism when she discovered that he was interested only in her spiritual welfare. Then there's that dog Blackie that bows its head when you say 'Pope.' You can scarcely call him a convert though, for he's a Frenchman. But I, what can I do? I gave you a copy of my book and interpreted it to you."

"*Hegelianism and the Sacramental System,*" she laughed. "After reading it I felt inclined to disbelieve in the truth of revealed religion altogether. You are too subtle, Mr. Mortimer. Now let us gallop!"

"My brute can't keep pace with yours," said he, whereupon she nodded and bounded away, her groom hurrying after her.

"Fool of a woman!" Mortimer mentally exclaimed. "If she does join us she'll set us all by the ears! Confound that organ-grinder!"

CHAPTER XIII

CATHOLIC SOCIETY AT NEWARK HOUSE

THE old Catholic families are notorious for their exclusiveness. Till recent years they were a proscribed race and cut off from the society of their peers; they accordingly intermarried a great deal and most of them are related to one another. In times of persecution they were loyal to Rome at great sacrifice to themselves, but when the persecution relaxed some became Protestants, others ceased to practise any religion, and all of them seemed to be in a state of discontent. They gradually adjusted their minds to the new state of things, however, and most of those who had become Protestants returned to their old creed. The Tractarian Movement, which led so many distinguished men into the Church of Rome, again disturbed them. They perceived differences between these new people and themselves and regarded them with suspicion, but in course of time they grew to tolerate their existence in the Church. They have now taken their places in general society, and are gradually ceasing to form a class apart. They are not much interested in art, literature, or science; they are intolerant of new faces, new ideas, anybody or anything that is new; they regard with strong disapproval the democratic tendencies of society, and strive to uphold the traditions of a past generation.

For the most part they are not animated with the proselytising spirit, and though very pious they rarely discuss the subject of religion. Frank Mortimer had almost lost caste among them by publishing his book *Hegelianism and the Sacramental System*, though the work had received the praise of competent critics; but that a man of his lineage should waste his time in stringing words together struck them as grotesque. It was his business to hunt and shoot and go into society, which business indeed he did not neglect, though it failed to engross the whole of his time. Of course these remarks do not apply to all the members of the old Catholic families, to the Duke of Thanet for example, who was one of the most admirable noblemen of his time; and after all much might be said in favour even of the less worthy of these Catholic patricians. They did not find their way into the divorce court, they preserved their dignity, and refrained from the self-advertisement and other vulgar habits practised by some of the leading members of society.

The relations between these people and Cardinal Grimsby were somewhat strained at the time with which this narrative deals. There was a disposition on their part to exalt Monsignor Vancelour into a sort of rival of the Cardinal, to "back up" their man, to indicate him to "outsiders" as the representative of all that was best in the Church of Rome. Monsignor was a man of peace and averse from intrigue, but he was in sympathy with the old Catholics, and thought that they were unjustly treated by the Cardinal; he accordingly allowed himself to appear as their cham-

pion. The questions at issue between him and Grimsby were not of great importance; he merely defended himself and his party from the charge of Anglo-Gallicanism brought against them by his Eminence, and asserted his and their right to their anti-democratic, anti-Home-Rule views. The Cardinal would not of course have denied them a right to the latter, but he endeavoured to check their tendency, or what he regarded as their tendency, to form a little party in the Church and to oppose himself. He thought that they wanted "keeping in order," that they were troublesome children, inclined to be disobedient, and that Monsignor made things too easy for them and for himself. Father Macdonald had a difficult part to play; he was, and was known to be, the Cardinal's man, but he had won the respect of the rector and congregation of St. Peter's and kept the peace between them and his Eminence.

The introduction of Lady Newark to Catholic society was the work of Monsignor Vancelour, who had undertaken it at the request of Father Macdonald. He represented her as an amiable, simple little lady who had married into a noble family, who was without friends, who was oppressed by the greatness of her position, and anxious to fulfil her responsibilities. The Duke of Thanet responded at once to this appeal and brought his Duchess and the Ladies Norbert to Newark House, Frank Mortimer induced his brother and the other members of his clan to call, and the Fitzurses, the Talboys, Mr. Stock of Stock, the Misses ffennel, Lady Glastonbury, and others followed suit.

Lady Newark was beholden to Mortimer for advice as to how she should comport herself in the presence of the Catholic "swells," as she called them to her friend, much to his horror. She was to say nothing and do nothing, he told her; she was to have no opinions,—he modified his advice,—to smile, seem pleased, and take everything for granted; and she carried out these injunctions and made a fairly favourable impression. Father Macdonald fulfilled the promise he had made her. He surrounded her with courtiers who relieved her of her troublesome duties and helped her in many ways, so that she did not miss Eva's capital business head; made her a patroness of various religious and charitable institutions; put her on councils and committees; set her going as a Catholic *grande dame*. Curiously enough he showed more tact in directing her in the temporal than in the spiritual sphere. He mapped out her time so that she was as a rule occupied in the performance of work which seemed important but which she found quite easy to do; with surprise and pleasure she discovered that by merely being present at an assembly and saying what she was told to say she had advanced a worthy cause or helped her co-religionists. She was very generous with her money, but considering her wealth it cannot be said that Father Macdonald was extortionate in his demands upon her purse; it is indeed only fair to him to say that he exercised his power over her in a very honourable manner, and that under his influence she was a far more useful member of society than she had been under the influence of her sister-in-law.

But in his spiritual direction he was not so tactful, not so successful. He seemed to expect her to become what she called a "piosity," and this led her to ape a zeal she did not feel, to attend two services when one would have satisfied the obligation, to fast when abstinence was all that was required of a person not robust. Father Macdonald noted these manifestations of a soaring soul, approved, and recommended higher flights. He knew that she was fighting against her inclinations, but the more severe the contest the nobler the victory; "Onward, Christian soldier!" expressed his attitude. Now this was a mistake, for it tended to make her a hypocrite and in the long run was calculated to loosen his hold upon her. "He expects too much," she complained to Mortimer; "he is too exacting." And that gentleman noticed that Father Macdonald's eye troubled her pretty much as Eva's eye had troubled her in the past; he bore in mind her falsity, treachery, spite, and thought it probable that these qualities would appear by-and-by in her conduct towards Father Macdonald.

Lady Newark's reception was an important event in her life. She had looked forward to it with considerable anxiety, for she had never given such an entertainment before. Her guests began to arrive at about half-past ten o'clock, Father Macdonald and Sir Ralph Vancelour coming first, and taking their places a little behind their hostess at the head of the staircase. They were her sponsors, so to speak, and the face of the younger of them wore a triumphant expression, for he was the instrument by which Provi-

dence had wrought her "conversion." The priest looked very sombre in the brilliantly lighted hall and in close proximity to Lady Newark, who had discarded black for the first time since her husband's death, and wore a toilette of white satin, her hair and bodice glittering with gems. She was extremely nervous at first and could scarcely get her words out, her confusion being increased by the band that performed in the pit of the hall; but she recovered her composure upon entering the splendid drawing-room that had been opened for the occasion.

This apartment, known as the Adams-room, was one of the most satisfactory "domestic interiors" in the metropolis. It was oblong in form and, like the dining-room over which it stood, had a large projecting bow that looked out upon the square. The ceiling was divided into three compartments, each of which enclosed a flat segmental dome, the chief decorations consisting of plaques of blue and white Wedgewood representing nymphs playing harps for the edification of lambs. The walls, pale neutral red in colour, were divided into panels which contained pictures by Angelica Kauffmann. The mantelpiece was of white marble supported by columns of red porphyry; above it was an oblong panel containing an exquisite carving representing "The Triumph of Aurora"; and above this and crowning the edifice was a superb picture by Titian, "The Adoration of the Magi." Delicate inlaid cabinets, filled with old china, lined the walls. The furniture was by Chippendale.

Most of the men and women present had the well-

known air, the amiable, meaningless smile, the studied politeness, the formal kindness of speech and manner, the apparent ease and frankness, the genuine reserve and self-control that characterise the best bred English people; but a few stood out from the others and exhibited signs of marked personality. Thus the Duke of Thanet showed a simplicity and good humour which were not in the least affected and which relaxed the stiffness of his companions; he amused his hostess by telling her a little joke about a donkey and an apple-cart and promised to show her a photograph of himself and his Duchess dressed up as a costermonger and his lady. "See how nice and simple your duke is after all!" mentally exclaimed young Mortimer, who was by way of satirising "his people." Lady Purley was another prominent person, a beautiful, languishing, dark-eyed widow of five-and-forty, a convert to Rome, extremely charitable, fond of art, very demonstrative in manner. She embraced her hostess and spoke of the great happiness that had been vouchsafed herself since she had joined the Church. "Exactly," was Mortimer's inward comment. "You represent a type. You were gay once and sought all the experiences that the world offers and then became a *dévotee* and are now enjoying your repentance." The Fitzurses were a numerous clan noticeable for their lofty stature and exquisite complexions—"and not much else," Mortimer would have added. "Behold these great strapping fellows with complexions like girls! One of them may aspire to be a groom-in-waiting on account of his looks, but if he misses that office

he will be content to devote his life to cricket and to sport." Taller by several inches than these young men and thin as a lath stood Simon Stock of Stock, the last of an ancient race, near-sighted, hard of hearing, with a halt in his gait and an impediment in his speech. Mortimer bent his head reverently on catching sight of this old man, the sole survivor of a dignified and honourable family. The history of the Stocks of Stock was a record of persecutions and misfortunes bravely borne, of unswerving loyalty to their Church and legitimate sovereign at the sacrifice of life, estates, and means of livelihood. Their present and last representative was very poor and looked as though he had passed through stormy experiences, though in truth his life had been placid and uneventful enough; his face was wrinkled and scarred, his members were barely able to perform their functions, and his mind was occasionally unhinged, so that he was shadowed by a keeper. But there was a dignity and charm about the old man that were very touching. Father Macdonald led him up to the hostess, and he bent over her and tried but failed to speak, whereupon he laid his hand gently upon her shoulder. The priest then led him away and helped him to a seat. The Misses ffennel then came forward: sisters of an uncertain age, tall, thin, lantern-jawed, dressed very shabbily in black; very rude, very pious, very fond of scandal. Their favourite pastime was priest-badgering; they were always threatening Monsignor and Father Macdonald to quit St. Peter's and worship in another Catholic Church unless certain alterations were made

in the conduct of the services, in the music, in the decoration of the altars, but no notice was taken of their threats. Father Jones, the third priest at St. Peter's, to whom they had of late carried their complaints, declared that he would sooner hear the confession of a shipful of Jack-tars than endure five minutes' conversation with either of these pious ladies. They regarded their hostess with a close scrutiny that lasted several seconds, and then expressed the hope that she was duly thankful for the gift of faith that had been vouchsafed her, the impertinence of the remark being emphasised by the sharp tone in which it was uttered. And then room was made for the famous Lady Glastonbury, a venerable old ruin much spoilt by restoration, the most pious and most worldly woman of her time, nearly eighty years of age, but still graceful in her movements and gracious and charming in manner. She made her hostess a neat little speech in a thin girlish voice and performed a curtsey that would have done credit to her granddaughter. Lady Caterham and Eva came late. Monsignor Vancelour was away in Rome.

The room was at no time crowded, there was an absence of heat and din; it was a quiet, perhaps a dull, but certainly a distinctive gathering. With few exceptions "the cousins" knew how to behave themselves; the silly affectations and tricks of speech, the painful attempts at epigram and paradox, the "smartness" of the refined-vulgar would have met with a chilling reception from these people. They spoke naturally and frankly, or with apparent frankness,

upon the subjects that interested them, chiefly sport and society, and for all his satirical asides Mortimer was really proud of them, and had reason to be.

His brother Lord Mortimer, an upright, pompous man, looked anxious and worried; he was conversing in an undertone with the Duke of Thanet. "Why has Father John [Monsignor Vancelour] been summoned to Rome? Has his book, '*Catholicism: the Religion of the Heart*,' been placed upon the Index?"

The Duke answered the latter question in the negative, and tried to allay the anxiety of his interlocutor.

"If Father John goes——," began Lord Mortimer.

"Oh, but he will not go," interrupted the Duke. "But we must be judicious," he went on seriously. "I really think that we are a little to blame; we are apt to stand aloof from his Eminence, and our attitude is misinterpreted by the enemies of the Church. We may not approve Cardinal Grimsby's recent actions——"

"I should think not!" cried the other. "This crusade——"

"Well, well," soothed his Grace; "Cardinal Grimsby may have been led away by his sympathy with the social purity people, but Rome is not alarmed and I don't think that we need be. As for this Home-Rule business—that's always with us. God's poor——"

"Are only of one nationality," put in Lord Mortimer.

"Sh! Sh!" cried the Duke in mock alarm. "How I wish that Father John could win the approval of the poor Irish! But they won't have him at any price.

His mission at Clerkenwell was an utter failure. Father O'Leary declared in my presence that he was little better than a Protestant. I persuaded Monsignor to put Father Murphy in the pulpit at St. Peter's one Sunday last month, but he didn't please, I am sorry to say. He harangued us for over an hour on the sin of spending our weekly wages in the public house and buying our loins of pork on the Sunday mornings. I thought that Lady Glastonbury would faint!"

"Why doesn't Father John sue the publishers of that ribald print, *The Anti-Papist*, for libel?" asked Lord Mortimer, who had no taste for his Grace's little jokes. "It is propagating the most grotesque lies about us."

"The matter is in his Eminence's hands," said the Duke. "He will strike at the right time and strike hard. You can depend upon him for that."

No such conversation as this reached Eva's ears. She heard nothing but conventional speech, and it astonished her that these Catholics were so much like other people. Many of them were acquaintances of hers and hitherto they had not affected her with a sense of their shortcomings; but she now demanded of them some striking singularity. The mark of the beast, signs of unusual sanctity, were not, however, discernible in these Fitzurses, Talboys, Norberts; so far as her observation went they were indistinguishable from other well-bred people. They did not look askance at her as an "outsider," as she had almost hoped they would, nor attempt to convert her; they merely uttered commonplaces. One of them, Reggie

Fitzurse, was singled out for admiration and wore the air of a man who had achieved great things because forsooth he had made a hundred runs in a cricket match!

"You are disappointed with us?" asked Mortimer.

"Yes, very much," she replied. "One of you is a great cricketer. Lady Glastonbury attended sixteen receptions last week."

"Another has written a work upon the Foundations of the Faith," said he, referring to himself. "The Duke of Thanet has had himself photographed as a costermonger. You are too exacting."

"Now M. de Keramur——"

"Calls upon ladies to whom he has not been presented and bids them forthwith change their creed. Would you have us all behave in that fashion?"

"I should respect you more if you did," said she with a smile.

Here Miss (The Hon. Ethel) Fitzurse approached her and observed that she had caught a glimpse of her in the enclosure at Ascot.

"Yes, I was there," said Eva, and then she changed the subject abruptly. "There is a very clever organist at St. Peter's Church, is there not?"

"Is there? Yes, I think the organ plays very well there."

"No, it plays too loud," corrected her younger sister, Miss Anne Fitzurse.

"I thought you might know the organist," observed Eva.

Miss Anne Fitzurse regarded her with mild astonish-

ment. Know the organ! But the next moment it dawned upon her that the thing didn't play itself, and she considered what sort of animal your organist might be. A noisy sort, she concluded. "I am not musical," said she.

"I am," Eva heard in a stage whisper, and turning beheld Lady Purley, the beautiful deep-eyed dame who, according to Mortimer, had been gay in her youth and was now enjoying her repentance. "When the organ is played softly," pursued her Ladyship, "I seem to hear the angels singing, singing to me, encouraging me, cheering me on my journey through this vale of tears. And when it is played loud," and she described two large semicircles with her beautiful hands, "I seem to hear the great chorus of heaven and long to uplift my voice and join in the glorious chant. Yes? You were saying . . . ?"

"I only asked Miss Fitzurse if she knew the organist. Do you?"

"No, but I have seen him often. I have seen him after Mass, after he has been playing some great throbbing piece, some heart-piercing composition, and have noticed that his thoughts are far away, that he has quitted earth." And the lady smiled, showing both rows of her teeth, and nodded. Upon resuming her conversation with Eva she spoke of the rapture of the inspired musician, and it subsequently appeared that she herself was that interesting person.

Hitherto there had been no fault to find with the hostess's manner, but Mortimer observed that her eye frequently wandered in the direction of Father Mac-

donald, and he was not surprised when she whispered to him, "I wish he'd go," referring to the priest. "These people are very simple and easy to get on with, but they want warming up a bit!"

"For God's sake be careful!" whispered Mortimer.

"Pooh!" said she. "I want my guests to enjoy themselves. Perhaps the supper will put some life into them."

Her wish was soon gratified. Father Macdonald quitted the house before the company filed into the dining-room, Lady Caterham and Eva followed in his wake, and thereupon a change came over the hostess's manner. It was not perhaps very noticeable, except to Mortimer, until after supper, but when she returned to the Adams-room it could no longer escape observation. Flushed by success and animated with the desire of amusing her guests, she exhibited a liveliness that was infinitely distressing. "Is there no one who can entertain us?" she asked aloud. "We're tired of that band; I have asked them to stop. We must vary the proceedings." And then she proposed musical chairs, which was received in silence, charades, forfeits; exclaimed, "Well we must do something"; indicated Lord Dartmoor, the head of the Fitzurse family, and said, "You make a suggestion."

It was not a lack of good nature nor of good breeding but sheer astonishment that kept her guests silent and made them stare at her as at some strange phenomenon. The Duke of Thanet, however, kind and tactful as he always was, pretended to see nothing unusual in her demeanour and tried to induce his

companions to divert themselves in one of the ways she had suggested. Unfortunately she was slow in perceiving the impression she was making, and continued with her ghastly merriment; rallied her companions on their lack of spirit, and took infinite pains "to make the evening a success."

When they had recovered from their astonishment many of her guests pretended to fall in with her humour, smiled with effort at her pleasantries, and tried to be responsive. Mortimer suffered agonies, but made the best of the situation, whispering, "Wonderful gift of humour!" "Most original person!" "Full of ideas!" and related anecdotes in her favour, which he invented on the spur of the moment. But the party broke up early, and this circumstance awoke the hostess to a sense of her mistaken behaviour.

"You are going to tell me that I made a fool of myself," she said to Mortimer, when all her other guests had departed. "Well, you think it and the others thought it," she continued irritably. "But if they're not contented with me they needn't come here again. I'm sure I don't want to make friends among such a parcel of sticks! The priests seem to think it their business to choose my friends for me."

"They have introduced you to the best families," said Mortimer with hauteur. "I am sorry that you are dissatisfied with their manners. You need not fear that they will thrust themselves upon you."

"Why did they stare at me when I proposed a game? Why did they go away so quickly?"

Mortimer shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose these people—you, I might say, for you are one of them—think it mighty condescending to come here at all."

"They meant to be kind. I didn't notice that they were in a hurry to get away. You have no reason to be angry with them."

"I don't know about that. I think it very rude of them not to have taken up my suggestions. Why shouldn't they have played musical chairs? There is no harm in the game."

"No, but it is not usual to play it at receptions. You were not giving a tea-party to a parcel of schoolgirls."

"When people come to my house I expect them to be civil to me."

Aware that he was losing his temper, Mortimer rose to take his leave, but she asked him to resume his seat, and he did so, upon which she began to rail against Father Macdonald, who was a good man, a holy man, she went on to say, but who expected her to be a "piosity." "And that's too ridiculous!" she concluded.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CATHOLIC DRAMA

WHETHER the Mass is a picturesque survival of mediævalism, the central rite of Christendom, or a detestable superstition, is a question which does not concern us here. The Mass is not a form of prayer, but an act of an awful and overwhelming nature, according to the Catholic belief, and it appeals to that widespread desire of humanity, not only for worship, but for worship in the form of drama. In challenging Eva to be present at the Mass in St. Peter's Church, where of all churches in the metropolis it was rendered with the greatest effect, Keramur bore this fact in mind; if he read her aright the great religious drama would operate upon her feelings and draw her into the Church of Rome.

She acquainted Frank Mortimer with the organist's idea: "He has challenged me to be present at the Mass," she said.

"Why do you submit to his impertinence?" asked her interlocutor; to which she returned, "You have frequently called my attention to the twentieth chapter of your '*Hegelianism and the Sacramental System.*'"

"You might read it again before going to the Mass," observed the author. "It has been praised by independent critics."

"I am sorry to say that I cannot understand a word of it."

"Then you had better not go to the Mass. If you are carried away by your emotions——"

"But a drama is intended to appeal to the emotions," she interrupted him, and they argued for a while, both parties losing their temper a little. There was some excuse for Mortimer, for when he grew earnest and launched into metaphysics the lady regarded him with a bored smile.

"You could easily follow me if you tried," said he, in a pet.

"I am so sorry, Mr. Mortimer," said she, "but somehow—I hardly like to say it—your arguments seem to tell against religion altogether."

"They support it by philosophy."

"Yes, I know you think so—please pardon me—but if you really wish people to join your church I shouldn't argue with them if I were you. I am sure that you know an immense deal about theology, but you don't make the subject attractive. Now I hope that you are not offended with me. You know how I believe in your judgment on other matters—on furniture for example."

Mortimer often had to listen to speeches of this kind from her, and on this occasion as usual she finished their colloquy by saying, "And religion isn't a question to discuss in a drawing-room, is it?" which was unfair, seeing that she had introduced it, as she always did, herself.

Later in the day Mortimer called upon an old lady

well known in the literary world, who entertained very harsh views of her own sex, and who liked clever young gentlemen to dance attendance upon her. She asked him about his friend, Lady Eva Fitzgower, and he told her of Keramur's challenge to the girl. The old crone, who was a pronounced Agnostic, applauded the action of the organist, and went on to deliver her opinion of the Church of Rome. "I believe that the church, the logical church, to which you say you belong, will endure," said she. "I have known women, ay, and men too, who ought to be, who must be Catholics, just as you and I ought to be, must be Agnostics!"

Mortimer inwardly cursed the speaker for an old hag and took a hasty departure; but on the following Sunday morning when he was present at the Mass, engaged in watching Eva, the words of his literary friend returned to him, and he wondered whether Eva Fitzgower was a woman who ought to be, who must be a Catholic.

He arrived at St. Peter's a quarter of an hour before the Mass began, and a few minutes later saw Eva enter the church with a proud step, her head erect and a look almost of defiance in her brilliant eyes. She parted with her maid under the organ gallery, marched up the nave, and without genuflecting took a seat in the front bench, one of the seats which were owned by the Duke of Thanet and which she might therefore have to vacate. It chanced, however, that his Grace brought only one daughter with him, Lady Mary Norbert, and Eva was left in possession of her place,

Lady Mary being on her right hand and Mr. Stock of Stock on her left. Her face was visible to Mortimer, and he watched it critically throughout the ceremony, trying to divine what was passing in her mind.

The church filled rapidly, and Mortimer perceived that the congregation would be a representative one: a grave-looking, dignified set of people, devout but not demonstrative, thoroughly English. Meanwhile the organist was playing upon the diapasons of the organ a slow "massive" composition with little colour, a prelude, probably an extemporisation. Father Macdonald was the celebrant, Father Jones and a priest from a neighbouring church were the deacon and subdeacon; Monsignor Vancelour, who had returned from Rome sooner than had been expected, was to preach.

Curiosity would seem to have been the emotion that possessed Eva at the beginning of the ceremony. Her eyes now watched the movements of Father Macdonald and the other priests, and now dropped to her book that enabled her to follow the dialogue between the clergy and the choir, who represented the people. Her interest in the scene differed little from that she felt when witnessing the opening of a secular drama; but when the choir began the *Kyrie* and the clergy remained standing and there was a pause in the action, her senses were touched by the music of Beethoven's setting to the prayer for mercy. She repeated the words as the choir sang them, and was soothed by the exquisitely melodious phrases. The first chord of the *Gloria* startled her, and she tried to recover herself,

to keep her forces well in hand, to remain cool; but the magnificent strenuous music wrought upon her nerves, the muscles of her face worked, and she glanced with excitement at Father Macdonald, the man who was about to perform the stupendous miracle, to call down upon the altar the Saviour of mankind! Meanwhile the modest girl at her side sat with her little gloved hands clasped in her lap, engaged in prayer.

In his sermon Monsignor Vancelour dealt with the Eucharist, with the spiritual hunger of man, and with the divine food that alone would satisfy it. The miracle was taken for granted; he simply described it as a fact. It was upon the hunger of the soul that he dilated: a subject of perennial interest, a matter of universal experience, a fact no more to be disputed than bodily hunger. The hunger of the soul! Man's need of the supernatural! He alluded to the writers, great writers, great thinkers, who have tried to satisfy the spiritual craving of humanity with the things of earth, mundane ideals, and showed how signally they have failed, and he wound up this portion of his discourse with a quotation from one of Professor Crewkerne's works which served the purpose of his argument as well as a quotation from a great orthodox theologian could have done. He then set to work sharpening this hunger, making the souls of his hearers ache with longing. Mortimer watched the effect of this upon Eva, whose expression of longing was almost painful to behold. "Yes, that old crone was right; Eva is a woman who must be a Catholic," he thought. An external object of devotion was

necessary to her and she must be intimate with it, apprehend it with her senses; but surely she dared not presume even to conceive the idea that the eternal God would deign to put Himself in personal contact with her! Such a conjunction, nay a union, nay something closer than a union between the creature and its Maker was brought about by the sacrament of the Eucharist, according to the preacher. The body of Christ was eaten by the communicant, and that was the food ordained by God to appease the hunger of which he had spoken, and that did appease it!

The great act was again delayed, now by the *Credo*, the first words of which were intoned by the celebrant and the whole of which was afterwards sung by the choir to the music of Beethoven. The movement, or rather movements—for there are four of them—of the *Credo* in Beethoven's mass in C are extremely emotional. The voices begin quietly in unison to the accompaniment of tremolo violins, and then spread into loud massive chords, the quick movement of the orchestra urging them to excitement. The words *Deum de Deo* are declaimed by the tenors, the words *lumen de lumine* by the altos, and then the trebles and afterwards the basses repeat them. The whole chorus then shout *Deum verum de Deo vero* in unison, giving an impression of tremendous energy. At the *Qui propter nos homines* the music becomes soft and solemn. The words *Et incarnatus est* are sung by a quartet very slowly in an exquisitely melodious phrase; the tenor soloist sings the words *Et homo factus est;* and then the character of the music changes as the bases pro-

claim *Crucifixus etiam pro nobis.* Thenceforth till the end of the movement the music expresses mystery and awe. The baritone soloist sings *Et resurrexit* in a cheerful, almost jocose strain, and then starts the most exciting portion of the whole Mass. The choir imitate the melody just heard, after which the trebles ascend the scale to the top A; then comes a chord upon the dominant; and then the voices shout *sedet ad dexteram Patris* on the note of C, breaking out into harmony and, with the instruments, prolonging the chord for several bars. This is so grand a climax that the hearer feels that the movement must needs decline in energy; but as a matter of fact it increases in energy. On an orchestral figure of triplets the voices rise, singing *Et iteram venturus est cum gloria;* stop short, the orchestra rushing madly to and fro in triplets; again proclaim the words *cum gloria;* wait for a blast from the trumpets, then shout *judicare* in unison; then wait for another blast from the trumpets, and then accompanied by the full orchestra burst into harmony on a terrific chord, singing yet again the word *judicare.* At this point Ernest brought on the full power of the organ. In view of the size of the instrument and the acoustic properties of the building, this may have been an artistic error, but the effect was extraordinarily sensational. The thunder of the huge pedal pipes, the fierce roar of the 'Great' reeds, the shriek of the mixtures, the gigantic volume of sound thrilled the hearer and thrust upon him a sense of the portentous nature of the prophecy: *Et iterum venturus est cum gloria, judicare vivos et mortuos.* And He shall

come again with glory to judge the living and the dead!

A pallor overspread Eva's beautiful face, and the dancing light of excitement was visible under the long lashes of her half-closed eyes. Mortimer perceived how strongly the music was affecting her, and though not very musical himself he was forced to pay a tribute to the power of sound.

Upon rising from his seat after the *Credo* Father Macdonald performed a number of acts; lifted up the bread that had been presented to him and offered it to God with a prayer; took the chalice to the middle of the altar and offered up the wine; prayed that the sacrifice might be acceptable to God; blessed the incense; incensed the bread and the wine, uttering prayers; washed and wiped the tips of his fingers; kissed the altar, called on the people to pray with him, and so forth.

Upon recovering, or partially recovering, from the excitement produced in her by the music, Eva determined to suspend her judgement upon the genuineness of the miracle about to be performed till the time of its occurrence, and to give all her attention to the action that led up to it. She would not anticipate, she would allow the argument to unfold itself, she would maintain the attitude she had assumed from the first, an attitude she would have adopted if witnessing a secular drama. The acts, gestures, and prayers, some of which have been tabulated, struck her as appropriate and well-planned; she followed them intelligently and gathered something of their symbolism; the drama

in short was so far a good drama and well acted. The *mise en scène*, too, was excellent; she realised that there was "meaning," "suggestion" even in the furniture of the sanctuary. She realised, moreover, that all the art of the church,—the sculpture, the painting, the music,—was employed to give solemnity and beauty to the Mass; that all the emotions of the worshippers gathered round this great central act; that all the hopes and longings of Catholicism proceeded from it. She realised this, she approved it, and an anticipation gradually formed itself within her that at the supreme moment a sign would be vouchsafed her, a sign that would prove to her that a miracle was indeed taking place. There are many instances of such a sign having been granted to individuals in the history of the Church; and if it had been granted to others why should it not be granted to herself? Anticipation of this sign possessed her to the exclusion of all other thought when the bell rang at the Sanctus, and then a trifling circumstance changed the anticipation into a demand. Her companion, Lady Mary Norbert, gentlest and sweetest of convent-bred girls, uttered what can scarcely be called an ejaculation, for it was so soft that it probably reached no one except Eva, a sigh, call it, a sigh wherein belief and love were expressed more eloquently than they could have been expressed in any form of words.

No "sign" was necessary to compel faith in this modest little lady. Then, why had not such easy belief been granted to herself? was Eva's inward question, and therewith she demanded a proof, not neces-

sary in her companion's case but necessary in her own, of the genuineness of the miracle. Pride spoke, jealousy spoke, and she hearkened to both voices. Why had Mary Norbert that which Eva Fitzgower had not, but desired? She would not sue, she demanded fair dealing on the part of her Maker. Already her thoughts implied that her demand would not be complied with, sprang from an anticipation of defeat.

The music ceased, the bell was rung again, the action proceeded, the climax was at hand. All the people in her neighbourhood bowed their heads; they believed; faith had been given to them—not to herself. They were in need of no proof, no sign; she was. God was unjust. Was not she as worthy as her companions? How many of them were willing to sacrifice themselves for the faith and die for it as she would be did she possess it—the proof, the certainty? Again the bell was rung, the church was hushed, not a cough, not a rustle disturbed the silence. Ahead in the sanctuary were movement and sound, for there the great scene was being enacted.

A slight stir caused Eva to turn, and she beheld old Simon Stock striking his breast and muttering, "May the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ profit me a sinner, as an eternal remedy, unto life everlasting."

The Host was uplifted and the bell rung again. A smile of mockery parted Eva's lips. In these days it doesn't matter in the least whether a person is a Catholic, or a Protestant, or a Dissenter, the adherent of any other sect, or an Agnostic. Broad-minded, reasonable people are no longer swayed by religious prejudices.

Superstition retires as civilisation advances. She looked about her at the bowed heads and kneeling figures. Poor deluded souls! They had only Rome's word for it that a miracle was taking place. She did not condemn these poor simple people, she pitied them—all perhaps except Mary Norbert and Mr. Stock, for they were very near to her, they were aggressive, they mumbled, they beat their breasts. It didn't occur to them that their neighbour might object to their antics. They did not give her sufficient room, they incommoded her; she was tired of kneeling and wanted to rise to her feet, but she was wedged in between the pair. And of course she wouldn't disturb them, she considered them; they took no thought of her! Mr. Stock was an old man and not quite sane, but Mary Norbert was in the full possession of her faculties and should not have forgotten her manners. But then she was a Romanist! The ringing of the bell, the movements of the priests got upon her nerves; she lost her tolerant spirit; she wished to put a stop to the proceedings, but that was impossible; she had to remain in her place.

At length the consecration was over and the bell rung for the last time. She could breathe now, and there was no necessity to recall her thoughts; she regretted her recent excitement, for there had been no cause for it; nothing whatever had happened; and she fell into a calm, tolerant, very reasonable mood. The church was pretty, and the altars were pretty, and the music was so so nice! Mary Norbert was a nice girl. Of course she was a Romanist, she had been born a

Romanist. She herself was an English Churchwoman —very orthodox—for thus she had been born. And there were Agnostics in the land; they were born Agnostic, or no—can you be born an Agnostic or orthodox? (she would put the question to Mortimer). Well, if they were not born Agnostics they inherited Agnosticism, or caught it, or adopted it, or were forced into it by their reason. Well, who had the right to blame them? Surely they had the right to their opinions! Meanwhile the music to this *Benedictus* was positively sweet and she had difficulty in preventing herself from beating time to it! She had one or two relapses from this calm, reasonable mood: for example after telling herself that one creed was as good as another and no creed as good as either, the question formed itself in her mind; "But why, why does the Romish Church claim and promise so much more than any other church?" Again, she inwardly exclaimed, "Rome's children ought to be saints, but they are not; therefore they are much worse than other people!"

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem. There was peace for Mary Norbert, but none for Eva Fitzgower. The ladies' eyes met after the last Gospel. Against her will the Duke's daughter had been conscious of the restlessness of her companion; she knew something of her history and dreaded her, regarding her as a lovely, dangerous woman; and her eyes expressed an instinctive aversion. Eva noticed this, and it roused the demon in her; she parted her lips in a mocking smile. The ladies were acquaintances of long standing, and their glances having met civility

demanded that they should exchange at least a friendly look, even though they were in church. Lady Mary was not aware that her glance had been provocative, and had expected to be saluted with a smile, as indeed she was, but with a smile that sent the blood to her cheek. As for Eva, the other's glance stirred afresh the fiery elements in her nature; she lost her self-command, and much happened before she regained it.

CHAPTER XV

LADY EVA YIELDS

WHEN Father Macdonald had recited the Divine Praises, the congregation rose, quitted the benches, and streamed down the nave and aisles of the church. Eva kept her seat, partly because she did not want to meet her acquaintances, and partly because she felt that she was under an obligation to the organist to hear the concluding voluntary. This was Bach's great fugue in G minor, a work which in ordinary conditions and as interpreted by Keramur would have given her much pleasure, but which in her present state served as an irritant and increased the confusion in her mind. The *subject* and *answer*, and afterwards the interruption of the one by the other, the intermingling of the counterpoints, the storm and stress of the work, the great *crescendo* at the finish tortured her nerves. She rose to her feet, dizzy, ill-tempered, anxious to vent her humour upon some one, and with a vague idea at the back of her mind that further troublesome experiences were in store for her.

She met her maid under the organ-gallery, and was quitting the church when she brushed against Frank Mortimer, who turned, bowed, and kept his eyes upon her a little longer than civility demanded. "Tiresome person!" she inwardly exclaimed. Aloud:

"How-dye-do," said she and nodded. She next espied Ernest de Keramur standing in the street at the bottom of the flight of steps that led up to the porch, and guessed by his attitude that he had hurried to the spot with the intention of addressing her. Thereupon she resolved to take this opportunity of putting an end to his attentions. A nearer view of him, however, revealed the features and expression that pleased her so much whenever she beheld them, and she modified her resolution; instead of dismissing him abruptly she would explain to him why further intercourse between them was undesirable. Meanwhile she stood irresolute, and did not seem to grasp what he was saying to her. "Yes?" she muttered absently. "Yes? Of course I shall be much pleased."

Her maid looked at her with astonishment. Her Ladyship much pleased to accompany a young man to his house and be presented to his mother! Dredge's sense of the proprieties was terribly shocked. "But, my lady!" she exclaimed. "My lady, here's the carriage."

"So I see," returned Eva; and then: "I beg your pardon, M. de Keramur, I didn't hear what you said," upon which Ernest repeated his request.

She opened her eyes wide in surprise. "Er-er, thank you. Thank you so much; but no—I think not. M. de Keramur, I wish to say something to you."

"But, my Lady, the carriage!" her maid ejaculated.

Eva turned to her. "You get in," said she. "I may be a minute or two. Don't wait," and she

watched the carriage till it was driven away, when she turned to the organist. "I trust that you will not be hurt at what I am going to say. You will believe, I am sure. . . . By-the-bye, you mustn't forget to thank Madame de Keramur."

"Oh, no, but she will be greatly disappointed. She is unfortunately a cripple."

This demand upon his companion's sympathy was not in the best taste, but the circumstance did not strike her. "Oh, how sad!" she exclaimed.

"But she is quite happy," he went on.

"Ah, is she? I was saying. . . ."

Again she paused. To explain to the young man without hurting his feelings that his attentions to her must cease would not in ordinary circumstances have presented any difficulty to her, but she was in a state of confusion and could not fix her thoughts upon the subject. She had an impulse to ease herself of the tumultuous ideas stirred in her by the Mass, to launch out into excitable speech, and the effort to check it employed all her energy. The consequence was that she presently found herself walking by the side of the organist, who like herself seemed to be unaware of his movements.

"My mother will be very grateful to you," said he, upon which she glanced at him with surprise, for she had not yielded to his request. But she perceived that he thought that she had, and the fact that she was accompanying him seemed to suggest that she had, and it was not worth while making a fuss over so trifling a matter.

Madame de Keramur's boudoir has been described. It resembled the show-room of a Catholic repository very tastefully arranged. Upon entering it Eva's attention was instantly drawn to the old lady, who was seated upon the sofa and covered up to her waist with a rug. "What a beautiful old lady!" thought the girl, and she smiled in her prettiest manner.

Ernest led her forward and presented her, and then stepped aside, whereupon Madame de Keramur said, "Ah, it is good of you to come to me! I wished to thank you. You helped my son to win the post and we are so grateful to you. I did not wish him to be a musician," she went on, lowering her voice; "but Monsignor said that he had genius and then I gave way."

She had just finished speaking when a maid entered and announced Monsignor Vancelour. Eva started visibly, rose to her feet, and moved quickly towards Ernest, who had just placed a book of music upon an easel. He glanced at her as she approached, and his eyes were arrested by her wild expression.

"Ah, is that a copy of Beethoven's Mass?" she asked in a hurried voice. "I want you to show me some passages and explain them to me. Yes, thank you, keep the book upon the easel."

Her manner, which was almost hysterical, greatly surprised Ernest. "I did not know that Monsignor was coming here this morning," he began, when she interrupted him.

"Yes, yes, I want you to show me some passages," said she, and opening the book at random she seemed

engrossed in the study of its pages when the priest entered the room.

He was aware of her presence soon after crossing the threshold, but he showed no surprise, merely glanced at her (her face was averted from him), and then addressed himself to Madame de Keramur in his usual courtly style. Meanwhile Ernest, who had bowed to the priest as he entered, was trying to keep his eyes from Eva, who was still feigning interest in the music.

"Lady Eva Fitzgower has come to see me. Is it not kind of her?" said Madame de Keramur aloud, perhaps to call the girl's attention to the priest, for she knew from her son that the pair had met.

Thereupon Eva had to face Monsignor, but having vouchsafed him a curt nod she turned and addressed Ernest in a hurried almost violent manner and in a tone that could be heard by the others. "The organ was too loud, much too loud, the music was too sensational, the service too emotional! Emotional music should not be performed in a place of worship. Of course you don't agree with me because you're a Roman Catholic. Religious belief is largely a matter of temperament. Excitable hysterical people are attracted by the Roman Church; but the English are not a very excitable race. Everybody knows that the emotions are apt to lead us astray, and many people think that the Church of Rome deliberately appeals to the weaker side of our nature. Still I must congratulate you, M. de Keramur. You certainly know how to excite your listeners, and I can imagine your per-

formances receiving much applause in a concert-room. I felt inclined to clap my hands at one part of the service. You must let me know when you play at a concert. But perhaps you play only in a church? No? I am so glad." She then asked Ernest to show her certain passages in Beethoven's Mass.

With ready tact Monsignor Vancelour continued his conversation with Madame de Keramur and tried to engross her attention while Eva was making this astonishing exhibition of herself.

"Ah, what am I saying!" inwardly exclaimed the girl; and then again her voice was to be heard addressing Ernest in the same reckless tone. "I looked out for you at Lady Newark's reception. The Duke of Thanet was there, Lady Purley, the Fitzurses, all the Catholics. Don't you know any of your co-religionists?"

"I am not a fashionable person," said Ernest quietly.

"Fashionable person!" Eva repeated with a laugh. "Fashionable Catholics, fashionable Protestants, they're much the same, are they not? Religion has very little influence over people nowadays. Thank you so much for showing me the music. You are so kind."

She then turned away from him and stood still for a moment, an ironical smile parting her lips, the light of excitement in her eyes. "Ah, what am I doing! What does it matter! A priest and an organist!" she inwardly exclaimed. She looked very beautiful at this moment, but not as a respectful admirer would have liked her to look. The wistful expression which

was so characteristic of her, the air of tragedy which seemed to hang about her, the kindliness and sincerity and frankness which were so frequently to be read in her countenance and which modified the impression produced by her commanding carriage and bold type of feature,—all these were gone, and the dangerous qualities, the bad impulses, the evil in her nature exhibited in their stead.

She bade adieu to Ernest, then turned to Monsignor, her face still retaining its ironical expression, bowed to him, gathered her skirt, and was moving towards the door when a half-smothered exclamation from the priest arrested her, and she turned and beheld a look of reproach upon his handsome face. The next instant he glanced at Madame de Keramur, and that awoke Eva to the old lady's existence and to the fact that she had ignored her in her passage to the door. In confusion she approached the stricken woman, who seemed about to speak and then started forward, and then fell back in a swoon. The girl emitted a cry and bent over the poor lady, while Monsignor went for a restorative. A minute later Madame de Keramur recovered consciousness and looked at Eva with a puzzled expression, whereupon Ernest re-introduced them. While doing so he was aware that the priest was frowning, and interpreting this as a sign that Monsignor disapproved his act, he made the most of his friendship with the girl in his explanation to his mother, his tone having a ring of defiance in it that was directed at the priest. Eva noticed this with a feeling of exultation that was utterly unworthy of

her; at the same time she was anxious to escape from an embarrassing situation, and the next minute she took her departure.

Monsignor lingered for a few minutes and then, bidding the old lady adieu, motioned Ernest to follow him, and when they had quitted the room expressed his displeasure with the young man for having brought Lady Eva to the house. Ernest resented this, but held his peace; and Monsignor, after observing his proud, obstinate expression, took leave of him without offering him his hand.

In her boudoir in the house in Eaton Square, Eva sat in a tragic attitude. She covered her eyes and part of her forehead with her left hand and extended her right, as though she were thrusting some horrible object from her sight; but the scene in Madame de Keramur's room would not quit her mental vision. The part she had played in it overwhelmed her with shame. She had lost her self-respect; she loathed and despised herself, of whom she had once been proud. Suddenly an old thought and a figure she had often used recurred to her: she had taken refuge in her pride; it was her citadel; and till Rome had undermined it she was a free woman. Rome *had* undermined it and had vanquished her!

When she fell into a calmer mood she recalled the state of her feelings prior to her shocking conduct in Madame de Keramur's room. She remembered her anticipation that a proof of the genuineness of the miracle would be vouchsafed her during the Elevation of the Mass, how the anticipation changed into a

demand, her savage disappointment that it was not gratified, her desire that the ceremony should cease, her impulse to cry out that it was all a sham. Upon quitting the church she was so filled with hatred and revenge against Rome that she felt she must needs deliver herself of them: this accounted for her irresolution and inability to express herself when she met the organist. Upon entering Madame de Keramur's room the feelings somewhat abated, but the announcement of Monsignor Vancelour stirred them afresh. She was glad that he had come, for he was a representative of Rome, and his presence seemed to afford her an opportunity of discharging her feelings, and she had discharged them. Ah what a figure she must have presented! She had disgraced herself; her pride was shattered; she fell again into a despairing mood; she longed for death. A minute later her eyes, which had been glancing wildly about the room, alighted upon the crucifix that had stirred such conflicting feelings in her of late; whereupon she uttered a cry, rose to her feet, flung herself upon her knees before the symbol, bowed her head, and wept.

It is a commonplace that true love stirs the creative faculty in the artist, urges him to expression. This had happened with Keramur; he had composed a fugue, and on the evening of the following day he set forth from his home with the intention of performing it upon the organ at St. Peter's. He hoped that "the lady with the wistful face" would be in the church, for he wanted her to hear the work, in which despite its necessary strictness of form he had infused much

emotion. Even to an unmusical person the fugue suggests complications, entanglements, conflicting ideas, and their solution in triumphant peace: an epitome, let us hope, of our history; and Keramur wished to encourage and cheer the distressed lady with his music.

His hope was gratified: she was in the church, kneeling in one of the side chapels before an altar that contained a gorgeous reredos. Monsignor Vancelour was going the Way of the Cross, a devotional journey he performed every day at the same hour, and Frank Mortimer was sitting on one of the benches in the nave, watching the pair and wondering whether they would meet.

As usual Keramur began his performance by extemporising upon the diapasons of the great organ; he then drew the four-feet and two-feet registers and gave out the *subject* of the fugue. This was repeated by another part at the interval of a fifth, and then the third part took it up and then the fourth, while the others ran on interweaving their counterpoints in harmonious progression. Again and again the theme appeared, now in one part, now in another; then it got broken up, and then disappeared altogether. Meanwhile the power of the organ was gradually increased.

Monsignor was approaching the chapel in which Eva was kneeling, and Mortimer saw that she was awaiting him, that she intended to address him. Her face was bright and radiant, but a cloud passed over it when the priest glanced at her, and she bowed her

head. Her attitude was humble, that of a suppliant; Monsignor's was paternal, kind, but full of dignity. It was a fine picture, Mortimer thought, this meeting of the beautiful lady and the courtly ecclesiastic in the dim Gothic church. But the music was disturbing, and Mortimer felt that Keramur's good angel must for once have deserted him; soft melodious strains should have accompanied the meeting of the pair, not this tremendous uproar. For Ernest had reached the *stretto* of the fugue, where the *answer* crowds in upon the *subject;* and to add to the tumult he brought battalion after battalion of sound into play till the whole force of the instrument was engaged. But as Monsignor and Eva walked towards the sacristy the struggle in the music ceased, the *subject* was again proclaimed triumphantly and for the last time by the pedal reeds, the counterpoints were resolved, and a massive chord brought the composition to an end.

END OF PART THE FIRST

PART II

THE "CONVERT"

PART II

THE "CONVERT"

CHAPTER I

THE STRUGGLE AT TANWORTH, AND ITS RESULT

AFTER her reception into the Church of Rome Eva was anxious to be reconciled with her sister-in-law in order that they might work conjointly in the interests of their religion. Tanworth Castle and Newark House might become meeting-places for ecclesiastical dignitaries, headquarters of the Catholic party, centres whence Catholic influences might spread. With this idea and burning with the zeal of the recent "convert," Eva accompanied her aunt to Tanworth, where it had been arranged that they should spend the first three weeks of August.

Lady Newark's invitation, which had been sent by post to Lady Caterham, was not very pressing, and her reception of the newcomers was not very cordial; moreover she displayed some awkwardness and hesitation while presenting them to the other members of her house party. These included Father Macdonald, and were all prominent Catholics, people whom Eva wished figuratively to embrace as her spiritual brethren. To her surprise and mortification, however, they showed a disposition to avoid her, so far as was compatible with good manners. They were

polite but cold and distant, and it added to her mortification to observe that they seemed more friendly disposed even to Lady Caterham than to herself. And they were her brethren of the faith whom she had wished to love, imbue with zeal and enlist in the cause of Roman propagandism! Her surprise and disappointment were so great that on the third day of her sojourn at Tanworth she said to her aunt, "Can you tell me why Tanworth's widow and these people are so cold and distant to us?"

"*Us?*" said the other. "*I* find them pleasant enough."

"I am very much disappointed with them," Eva remarked.

Lady Caterham seemed amused. "I thought you would be," she observed.

"My little sister avoids me."

"She fears you."

"Fears me? Why?"

Lady Caterham dropped her eyes and smiled.

"Why should she fear me?"

"I hardly like to say. I wish to spare your feelings." But on Eva's repeating her question she observed, "You are a very ambitious person, my niece. The Roman Church is a very wonderful organisation, and it is your ambition to have a hand in the direction of it. You would like to utilise this woman's wealth in the interests of the church you have taken under your patronage."

"But she herself is a Catholic."

"But not a zealot."

"But why should the other people here, even Father Macdonald, fight shy of me?"

"I fear that they misconceive your motives in changing your creed."

"What do you mean?"

Again Lady Caterham smiled, but, as her companion perceived, she was not unwilling to communicate her news. "They may think that you changed your creed in order to regain your influence over Tanworth's widow."

Eva started. "Has she told them that?" she asked.

"She has certainly hinted to that effect."

Eva emitted a little cry. "Oh no! It is too cruel! too treacherous!"

"Your experience of the woman might have led you to expect something of the sort."

"We must quit Tanworth to-morrow."

"I intend to remain here."

"But how can you?"

"I think it as well that we should come to an understanding, Eva. I don't interfere in your affairs and I cannot allow you to interfere in mine. Much that you've done in the past, probably much that you will do in the future, I don't and sha'n't approve. You did not and you will not consult my wishes, and there is no reason why you should; but I claim reciprocity. I am afraid that this sounds rather brutal, and I don't like to have to say it; I want us to be on good terms, I am anxious that you should be happy; but we think differently on many subjects. For example, I think

it my duty to try to bring this woman back to the Establishment, and I shall remain here or wherever she is and try to influence her against Father Macdonald. It will be a perfectly fair contest, and the stronger and more persistent of us will win. It would be the height of absurdity to pretend that the woman's spiritual welfare were really involved in our little struggle."

Eva's only comment upon this was a reproachful glance at the speaker. After a short silence she said, "Well, you can hardly expect me to remain here while that—that sort of thing is going on."

"Certainly not. You are already in a false position. I intend if possible to prolong my visit here, and if you like I will lend you the house in Eaton Square with Emma [Lady Braintree], who is already settled there. I have let Frampton; I can't afford to keep the place up. Perhaps you had better engage Miss Norris again. No? Well, it is not necessary. Tanworth's widow tells me that she intends to make this place her headquarters for a year or more, and I hope to remain with her the greater part of that time. You will, of course, be able to go wherever you like with Emma, and she will entertain our friends in Eaton Square; but in my absence I shall have to ask you to defray half the expenses of the household. Of course it will be very dull for you during the next few months, that is if you remain in London. You need not do so; you can pay visits with Emma or go abroad with her. She likes gaiety, poor thing! It would please her immensely to take you about during the

winter and the season. Do you agree to this arrangement?"

Eva replied in the affirmative.

Thus was the girl virtually ejected from the mansion in which she had spent the happiest days of her youth. Her reflections upon the circumstance may be imagined, also her reflections upon her sister-in-law's treacherous character, and upon the thought that several of her most respected co-religionists must judge her guilty of a particularly mean deceit. However "Work! Work! Work!" she mentally exclaimed; and no sooner was she installed in the London house with Lady Braintree than she set about laying her plans for the campaign that was to win her such notoriety in the great social world.

Nineteen months passed before the paths of the sisters-in-law again crossed. They met occasionally during that period, and for short intervals changed their abode, but the greater portion of the time was spent by Eva in the house in Eaton Square (under the chaperonage of Lady Braintree) and by Lady Newark in the huge Brummagem castle in the Midlands.

It was not a difficult task for Lady Caterham to win the confidence of the Marchioness and get herself invited to prolong her sojourn at Tanworth. After a week or two the younger woman liked to have the older one with her because her presence kept in check the strong religious element at the castle. Lady Caterham soon perceived that Father Macdonald's eye troubled her companion and that she was bored

by the people with whom he surrounded her; accordingly she gave the little widow cheerful pictures of life in which there were no exacting priests and no "piosities." She hinted that Father Macdonald interfered too much in her companion's affairs, that he was brusque, not quite a gentleman, that his manners to herself, for example, were not what they should be, mere Protestant though she was. She posed as a martyr. Father Macdonald identified her as his adversary and was in truth a little aggressive; he would allude in general company, even at meal-times, to the work going on in the chapel attached to the castle (it was being converted into a Roman Catholic place of worship) and to religious subjects. Whereupon Lady Caterham would, in a glance, communicate her embarrassment, her distress, her shocked feelings to her hostess. The priest endeavoured to restrain the growing intimacy between the ladies, and his endeavours were not in the best taste, Lady Caterham averred to the Marchioness. These tactics were so far successful that Lady Newark inclined to the side of her new friend when she was with her; when, on the other hand, she was with Father Macdonald she fell again under his power. But the priest could only pay occasional visits to Tanworth, and in his absence Lady Caterham made headway. Here is a sample of the conversation between the ladies:

"My dear, you must remember that Father Macdonald's a saint," said the Marchioness.

"Oh I can make allowances," returned her companion.

"Now Monsignor Vancelour, Father John as we call him, is a most refined person."

"Yes? He is in trouble at headquarters, I hear. I have a slight acquaintance with Cardinal Grimsby."

"I am afraid, dear Lady Caterham, that you don't like priests."

"I respect their cleverness."

"Oh, but they are good—good!"

"Good managers—yes." And then she would describe to her "dear Mary" the methods of the priests. She respected them greatly, she at least was fair to them; it was not true that personal aggrandisement was the motive of their acts, still less was it true that they aimed at the gratification of their passions. Their subtle, Jesuitical, crafty, and—from a worldly though not heavenly point of view—dishonourable methods of gaining influence over people, women especially, were adopted in the interests of their church. "Mind you, I am a sort of Jesuit myself," added Lady Caterham. "Oh yes I am! I don't mean to say that I do harm that good may come of it, speak with a double meaning, or anything of that sort. I am an Englishwoman—*we* are Englishwomen—but I do like to gain influence over people, not in the interests of a church but in the interests—well, of my, of *our* family. I think of my brother; I hope that you think of him sometimes." The candour of this naturally appealed to the Marchioness. Then Lady Caterham obtained leave of her hostess to invite some of the old friends of the Great Lord Newark to Tanworth, and they accepted the invitation; but this move did not advance

her cause much, for the newcomers mixed in a friendly spirit with Lady Newark's Catholic guests, and in the eyes of the hostess were indistinguishable from them, both sets being quiet, restrained, dignified, and therefore, in the opinion of the Marchioness, "dull—dull—dull—deadly dull!" Apparently, however, Lady Caterham was progressing, for when Father Macdonald wrote one day to the mistress of Tanworth to regret that in the next few months he would not have time to visit her at the castle and to recommend to her a permanent chaplain, the Marchioness, at the instigation of her new friend, declined the services of the latter and suspended the building operations in the chapel. So anxious indeed was she not to offend the religious susceptibilities of Lady Caterham that she would not order her horses out on the Sunday mornings but drove to the neighbouring town to Mass in a hired vehicle!

But the weeks, the months, a year passed, and the struggle between Lady Caterham and the representatives of Rome was still in progress. The older widow was nearly always in the company of the younger, but she rarely had her to herself. Lady Newark's Catholic acquaintances were constantly turning up and being restored to the confidence of the shifty little lady; moreover, her business affairs were still in the hands of the Catholic firm of solicitors to whom she had transferred them after her rupture with Eva. The ubiquitous Mortimer was much amused by this struggle. Lady Newark was wont to complain against both parties to him, and, he suspected,

was in the habit of abusing and betraying each to each.

One day, Lady Caterham chanced to enter her hostess's boudoir at Tanworth, found it empty, and was quitting it when her eye fell upon two books in brown-paper covers. Both were well-thumbed; one turned out to be a frivolous novel, and the other a copy of "The Garden of the Soul." She read a page or two out of the latter, and then put it down and took up the novel. "This," said she a few minutes later, "is the more important"; and then bethought her of her nephew, Alec. Life at Tanworth was dull; the Marchioness's acquaintances, for all their high-sounding names, were lacking in "smartness" and brilliance; and Lady Caterham pondered the idea of summoning Alec to the castle and asking him to divert the little widow. It was a hazardous experiment; Alec was brilliant and up to date, but he had friends in the neighbourhood with whom it was undesirable that Lady Newark should become acquainted. Still she thought she could trust her nephew to amuse the woman without leading her into mischief, it being evident to her by this time that unless her companion's taste for light amusement were ministered to she would either take some desperate step or eschew "the world" altogether and fall completely under priestly dominion. Alec was accordingly summoned to Tanworth.

The influence of this handsome, high-spirited young man was at once felt by the inmates of the castle. He organised a series of entertainments, beginning with a *fête champêtre* and following it with a Watteau

picnic, in which he had the aid of the artistic Mortimer; when the shooting season set in he invited some of his friends to join the house party, and good sport was enjoyed in the Tanworth preserves, the ladies turning up at luncheon, and taking part with the young men in charades, dumb-crambo, and other such games in the evening after dinner. He taught his hostess to ride. He was amazed that she had not already learnt that accomplishment, and expressed himself as such to his aunt, Lady Caterham. "No wonder you have had trouble with her—you and Eva," said he. "You don't understand her a bit." He characterised Mortimer as a "thundering ass," and was not at all surprised that a woman who had been denied the means of rational enjoyment should have taken to Romanism; in such circumstances he himself might have taken to it, Romanism or drink or something of the sort. He and the Marchioness got on very well together, and during his sojourn at Tanworth she was far happier than she had been at any time since her husband's death.

Matters having reached this satisfactory state Lady Caterham, who was in poor health, arranged to spend the winter and early spring in Cannes with her niece. She would have liked to take the Marchioness with her, but feared to propose this lest the little widow should imagine that she was distrusted; she accordingly wrote to Lady Braintree, asking her to come to Tanworth and remain there in her absence. But before Lady Caterham quitted the castle an incident that was to have important consequences took place, an

incident that did not come to her knowledge till some months after its occurrence. It consisted in Alec's presenting to Lady Newark the lady who shared his racing stable, the notorious Mrs. Wimpole, and it took place as he and his companion were quitting the field after the first run of the season in the neighbourhood of Tanworth. To do him justice, he tried to avoid making the ladies known to each other—nay, he was rude to Mrs. Wimpole, swinging his horse round as she approached, and telling the Marchioness that they must hurry away; but Mrs. Wimpole came abreast of him and asked him point-blank to present her, upon which he complied with the request. On the way home he exhibited a quality not seldom to be found in men of his stamp, moral cowardice; he begged, implored the little widow, made her promise him, give him her word of honour that she would keep her introduction to Mrs. Wimpole a secret from "Lady Cat."

In the following week Lady Caterham journeyed to London with Alec. "I think we can trust her for the next few months," said she; "but in my absence you might run down to Tanworth occasionally. I have established Lady Braintree and a few safe people there."

Alec pleaded a heap of engagements.

"Well, you have been of great use to me," said his aunt. "Thank you, thank you, my dear fellow."

"I am afraid that I don't deserve many thanks," was his inward comment, and he meditated on the probable consequences of his act of introducing the

Marchioness to his horse-racing partner. "I must have a smoke and a drink over this," he thought, after quitting his aunt, and he strolled into a club and ordered those aids to reflection. "Now there isn't an atom of a doubt that Loo Wimpole is a jade," he mused. "She'll 'discover' the little fool, trot her out, and help herself—trust Loo for that! But how can I prevent it? I hate these complications. Hang it all, why should I bother myself about the matter? It isn't my fault; it's Lady Cat's and Eva's and that cocky little prig Mortimer's fault! They're responsible. I was called in too late. The best thing I can do is to bolt!"

With Lady Caterham abroad, Mortimer abroad, the priestly influence greatly reduced, and only Lady Braintree and a few powerless persons at Tanworth, the way to the Marchioness lay open to the advance of Mrs. Wimpole. They met for the second time a few days later, a correspondence ensued, and Mrs. Wimpole visited the castle, neither Lady Braintree nor any of the other inmates knowing anything about her. Then the Marchioness returned her visit and spent a week at The Nook, which was about ten miles distant from Tanworth, and found herself in very "smart" company. Some weeks later Lady Newark journeyed to town to see her dentist (so she told her companions at Tanworth), but upon arriving in London she drove to a house in Park Lane, where she stopped a day or two with her new friend and made the acquaintance of some more "smart" people. "Everybody wants to know you," said Mrs. Wim-

pole. "You're the person we all want," which was a truthful and a frank statement. During the winter and early spring Lady Newark made frequent excursions from Tanworth for change of air; went north, south, east, and west, and crossed the Channel, and wherever she went she met Mrs. Wimpole and a "smart" crowd anxious to make her acquaintance.

Lady Braintree's suspicions had been awakened long before this, but she disliked prying and tale bearing; at length, however, she felt it her duty to let Lady Caterham know of the little widow's wandering propensities. The news reached Cannes in the second week of April, but by that time the Marchioness had fallen into the hands of Mrs. Wimpole, having passed successively out of those of Eva, Father Macdonald, and Lady Caterham.

CHAPTER II

THE NOTORIOUS MRS. WIMPOLE

MRS. WIMPOLE was a prominent member of what was known as a "certain set." There was a mystery attaching to her birth, rumour saying that she was the daughter of a royal personage, and nothing was known of her late husband. Her social success was a matter of astonishment and disgust to well-bred people, but she was a dangerous woman to quarrel with, and more than one *grande dame* who had turned her back on her had subsequently welcomed her under her roof. "I suppose that I must ask that person?" was often said, and the usual response to it was, "Of course you must." "But why should I?" was occasionally asked, whereupon the other party to the dialogue would lift her shoulders; and the men were as guarded as the women in their references to the notorious Mrs. Wimpole. Those who incurred her enmity were dropped or frowned upon by people in high places, and she was accordingly a welcome guest of women of the strictest virtue. Again, wherever she went a "certain set" followed her; moreover she was very successful in "discovering" people who were able and willing to spend their money upon the gay crowd. In recent years she had handed over to the latter a company promoter, an upholsterer, a grocer, and a dealer in manure, true Britons all of them, who owed their

success to their habit of early rising, to their sobriety, and to their having taken to heart the lessons of the Bible. Two of them had subsequently smashed and their pieces had been flung into the sewer, but they had all served their turn and helped to entertain the crowd and to pay Mrs. Wimpole's debts. Despite her childish prattle the lady was very shrewd and knew how to play the game of life; she was an authority upon horseflesh and finance; she cheated only when she knew that it was safe to do so; she spent other people's money in charity, wheedled interviewers and publicists, and was held up to the admiration of the virtuous British public.

A fact in the history of this versatile lady is that she had tried to inveigle the Duke of Oakham into an engagement with her, and would probably have succeeded had not his Grace transferred his regard to the brilliant Eva Fitzgower, with a result that has been chronicled. Alec had at one time contemplated marriage with her, but had abandoned the idea upon discovering that the head of his house, the Great Lord Newark, was vehemently opposed to the match. Mrs. Wimpole was aware of this fact (Alec who was then a green youth having told it to her), and also that Lord Newark's opinion of her had been largely influenced by his daughter, at that time nineteen years old but already a woman of the world. Moreover, Eva was in the habit of dropping her eyes when she chanced to meet Mrs. Wimpole. All this occurred prior to the opening of this history, but it lived in the memory of Mrs. Wimpole, whose sentiments towards Eva may be

imagined. The hope of indulging her revenge against the girl was not however her chief motive in thrusting herself upon the Marchioness: this was the hope of inducing the little widow to pay her debts in return for her act of "discovering" her to the "smart" world.

One day in early spring, twenty months after the events described in the first part of this history, Mrs. Wimpole sat in her boudoir in her town house in Park Lane. The colours of the apartment were blue and white, and it contained much worthless bric-à-brac, and a great number of cheap photographs of exalted personages with autograph signatures. The room witnessed to a lack of taste on the part of its owner, and it reeked of the strong scent with which she was in the habit of impregnating her person. Her appearance was decidedly original and had gained for her the nickname of the "Powder Puff." She was short and plump, with tiny features, a mouth like a button, full dimpled cheeks, a milky complexion, and crisp curly hair cut short at the back and dyed gold. Her eyes were grey, very clear, very bold in their glances, and the single eyeglass that she wore emphasised the impertinence of their regard. She was dressed in a white teagown, the skirt of which was cut so short that her silk stockings were visible above the ankle. There was a bacchanalian grace about her movements, but any lingering doubt that could be entertained in favour of her modesty was settled once and for all by her manner of seating herself.

To her there entered, at about five o'clock, Lady Newark, who looked like an overdressed doll, and

who came forward with a little springing step, a sort of hop, recently acquired in imitation of her friend.

"They're all coming!" she exclaimed, "or nearly all. I have the list. Here—here it is." Saying which she handed the scroll to Mrs. Wimpole, who put it aside in order to kiss her visitor and help her to remove her hat and jacket.

"I am not at home to anyone else this afternoon—so that we shall not be interrupted," said the hostess, and she motioned her companion to a seat upon a divan, took a chair opposite to her, and inserted the glass in her eye. "Any ructions?" she asked.

"Er—er—yes."

"Tell me—do! Tell me what Lady Caterham said about me."

"I scarcely like to," said the Marchioness; but upon being pressed she told her companion that she had been described as a dangerous and unprincipled woman. "Of course I said that it wasn't true. Then she said that of course I would not pursue my acquaintance with you now that I knew that it was against her wishes, that it was quite impossible that a member of *our* family could associate with you, that she was absolutely sure that I would never depart from the traditions of the Fitzgowers—just what Eva used to say."

"And did you promise to throw me over?"

"Of course I didn't. I—I—I want to ask you. You said once that you had no religion at all, that you didn't go in for that sort of thing; but you have no special feeling against Catholicism, have you?"

"None whatever. I think the Catholic services are quite too lovely."

"I am so glad because—because I led her to think that you—you were a Catholic and that Father Macdonald—I—I'm afraid——"

"I understand. You led her to think that Father Macdonald recommended or sanctioned our friendship."

"I hope that you don't mind?"

"Mind? Not a bit of it."

"You see it might have been true. Perhaps you might let it seem as though it were? We needn't be afraid of Father Macdonald, for I asked him if he knew you, and he said, 'No'; then I said you might be going to become a Catholic, and he said, 'Let us hope she will'; then I asked him if there was any wrong in our becoming friends even though my family objected to you, and he said 'Certainly not.'"

This was uttered in such an artless, innocent manner that Mrs. Wimpole had difficulty in restraining her laughter. "And what did Lady Caterham say when you told her that Father Macdonald recommended me to you?"

"She lost her temper and said that he must be either a knave or a fool."

"And of course you resented that?"

"Naturally! I told her that she always spoke against him to me and tried to make mischief between us, and that it was very wrong and wicked of her. I said that Father Macdonald was a holy man, and you know he is, my dear Louisa; he's a saint. And I

said that I was going to remain a Catholic in spite of her and the Bishop. I was very much excited, and I went on a good deal about religion."

"And what was the upshot of it all?"

"She went away in a huff."

"But of course she came back again?"

"Yes, she called again the next day, but she was much calmer and tried to persuade and coax me. When that failed she cried."

"Lady Caterham cried? That hard, weather-beaten old woman cried?"

"Yes, and you never saw such a sight! Her face was awful; it frightened me and I ran away."

"Not literally?"

"Yes. I ran out of the room and into my boudoir. Some minutes later she followed me there, and then she *was* solemn. She said that she was an old woman in poor health who had lost her husband and most of her money and had one foot in the grave. Then she begged and implored me to give you up. But I told her that I *must* obey Father Macdonald; that it would be a sin if I didn't; that she couldn't understand it, not being a Catholic. Then she looked at me in a curious sort of way, as though I was much smaller than I am, if you understand me, much smaller and very ugly; and then she went away."

"And have you seen her since?"

"Yes, once or twice, but she was quite nice and ordinary, as though nothing had happened. She's coming to the reception."

"That's all right." Saying which Mrs. Wimpole

rose, took up the scroll she had left upon a table, removed the glass from her eye, and muttered, "Yes, yes, yes," as she pricked off the names with her pencil. Upon coming to the name of Eva Fitzgower she pronounced the name and looked at her companion.

"I had to ask her," said Lady Newark.

"Of course. But you must be careful not to get mixed up in that affair. You must let it be known that you thoroughly disapprove her courses, else your name may be compromised. But of course you have already done so?"

"Oh yes. I have spoken to several of my Catholic friends about the matter. I have told them that I think Eva extremely injudicious and foolish."

"And what did they say in return?"

"Very little. They didn't seem to like it—I mean they wouldn't talk about it."

"Depend upon it, they think the more."

"Well no, I fancy not. I don't think they see the danger. They have a great belief in Monsignor Vancelour. And, you know, I really think he is a very good man."

"Of course he's a very good man, and very attractive, and very good-looking, and very simple. I don't suppose for a moment that he's to blame. By-the-by, you know that he was once in love with an Austrian Archduchess?"

"No!" exclaimed Lady Newark, as though the fact were discreditable to him.

"Yes. He loved and lost and then became a priest:

that's his history. Lady Eva's is somewhat similar. She loved——"

"Loved?"

"Why yes; do you mean to say that you never heard of it, never heard of the Oakham scandal? It was the talk of a season. These Fitzgowers are clever at hushing up things! She was engaged to the Duke of Oakham, but the Fitzgowers objected to the match, for the man was a very black sheep; on discovering which he offered to release her, or threw her over, or tried to. But she stuck to him, she wouldn't let him go, scandalous person though he was, and the end of the matter was that he killed himself to get rid of her."

This was of course not a correct account of the tragedy that had darkened Eva's life, but it was accepted as such by the Marchioness. Even the truth would have surprised and possibly shocked her; as it was, her amazement and indignation rendered her speechless. At length she burst out: "And it was *she* who was always spying upon me, glancing at me reproachfully, implying that I was not to be trusted, dreading that I should bring disgrace and discredit upon the family!"

Mrs. Wimpole regarded the speaker through her eyeglass, and inwardly exclaimed, "Well, you are a simple person!" Aloud, "Ah well, that happened long ago," she said. "I don't think it tells against her much; she couldn't help loving the man, and I don't suppose that she can help loving the priest, or that he can help loving her."

"But *does* she love Monsignor, and *does* he love her?" asked Lady Newark, who really did not believe in the existence of the passion on either side, though, at the instigation of her friend, she had been spreading rumours of it among her friends during the past few weeks. "For, mind you, I have never said that they *did* love each other," explained the Marchioness. "I have only said I hope that they *don't* love each other, and that Eva was injudicious. As you said, we must do what we can to avoid scandal."

"Yes, of course," agreed the other; "and we must try to prevent things coming to a crisis. It would be a very shocking thing if she and the priest were to——"

"Oh, it would be dreadful!" exclaimed the Marchioness.

"Then there are the Anti-Papal Leaguers who, I am afraid, are closing round the poor priest. Your relation or connection by marriage, Colonel Fitzgower, is to the fore among them, and when he finds out that his own niece—oh, it will be a tremendous scandal, dear Lady Newark, and you must do your utmost to keep out of it!"

They discussed the matter for nearly an hour, Mrs. Wimpole advising her friend to continue with her efforts to arrest the scandal by pursuing a course that had originated it.

After the tea was brought in they changed the subject, and considered the details of Lady Newark's great reception, at which "all the world" was to be present.

CHAPTER III

THE ZEALOT

THE situation afforded rare opportunities to the dealer in mischief; but, that it may be understood, it is necessary to give a brief account of Eva Fitzgower and some other characters in this history during the months that witnessed the struggle between Lady Caterham and the representatives of Rome at Tanworth Castle.

Allusion was made to a campaign in which Eva was engaged: this was a series of operations conducted on behalf of the Church of Rome. "If I were a Catholic I should be a tremendous proselytiser!" she had exclaimed before she entered the Roman communion, and events had justified her statement. Nor should her success in this character cause surprise if the circumstances are taken into account. The reigning beauty of three seasons, the daughter of a wealthy and popular nobleman, she had retired from society upon the death of her fiancé and lived for a while in magnificent retirement. She had been much missed. Indeed a certain exalted personage had more than once inquired after her. "Where's the dark beauty, Fitzgower?" he had asked. "Where's the dark beauty, Mr. Mortimer?" both these gentlemen being occasionally honoured by the notice of the great man. Upon re-entering society with her aunt, Lady Cater-

ham, however, her manner had kept people at a distance, and so far as was possible with so handsome a girl she had remained in the background. But when she joined the Roman Church her manner changed completely, she recovered her good spirits, went everywhere, as the saying is, with her old kinswoman, Lady Braintree, and laid herself out to please. Her high spirits were natural, for she was really happy, but she was neither light-headed nor light-hearted, for behind her looks, acts, and speeches there was the serious purpose of winning converts to Rome. She found a considerable number of people interested in the Catholic Church, a few inclined to join it, many favourably disposed toward it; and amongst these she carried on her propaganda. She persuaded them to visit St. Peter's, and, when they would allow it, introduced them to Monsignor Vancelour, who, though by no means a great ecclesiastic, realised the ideal Roman priest of well-bred English people. Her enthusiasm, her zeal, her burning sincerity of faith were contagious; she left no stone unturned to effect her purpose; she devoted all her powers to this one object, The Cause, as she called it, exhorting, persuading everyone with whom she was on terms of friendship. She revealed glimpses of a large, kindly woman's nature, of a heart full of sorrow for the scepticism and indifference of the age; and she often succeeded where a Newman would have failed.

On the whole society was disposed to regard her enthusiasm for the Roman Church with tolerance, with a kindly humour not unmixed with admiration.

Grave statesmen, dull lawyers, giddy worldlings were struck by the singular phenomenon of a fashionable beauty interesting herself in their spiritual welfare; they not only forgave her, they were fascinated by her. But of course she made many enemies, many very bitter enemies, and was often laughed at behind her back and encouraged in a spirit of jest or curiosity. For the most part, however, she was popular; "she went in for Romanism" just as another woman "goes in" for slumming, another for palm-reading, a third for skirt-dancing. Curiously enough, she was more popular in general than in Catholic society; the old Catholic families fought shy of her and did not like her; this was especially the case if they were on visiting terms with the mistress of Tanworth. But even those who knew not Lady Newark showed a disposition to avoid her; she was too enthusiastic, too stirring a person to please them. They were annoyed, moreover, at the importance assigned to her by Monsignor Vancelour; they thought that he made too much of her, and that she was too much *en evidence* at St. Peter's Church. Again, she had dropped some unfavourable remarks about them which had reached their ears through the instrumentality of the Misses ffennel. These ladies, who were distinguished for their piety and love of scandal, "wanted to know" many things:—for example, why Monsignor never had a moment to spare for them nowadays, why "the organ always played" at the hour of sunset when Lady Eva was kneeling before the altar that contained the gorgeous reredos, why she allowed Mr. Mortimer

to dance attendance upon her, and allowed herself to be seen conversing with M. de Keramur. On the other hand, Lady Purley, the lady who was enjoying her repentance, "loved," "worshipped" Eva, Saint Eva, as she called her, which sounded rather curious, and of course so enthusiastic a convert and successful a proselytiser had many admirers among the Catholic body.

À propos of admirers, Sir Ralph Vancelour had fallen in love with Eva. It may be remembered that he was a man of lofty principles and boorish manners, something of a saint and something of a lout; that he had been instrumental in the "conversion" of Lady Newark, and that this had brought him into opposition with Eva. Upon meeting the girl after she had joined his church, however, he was struck by her fervour and by her frank, kind manner towards him, despite their disagreement in the past, and he was indignant with Lady Newark and "his people" for their suspicious attitude towards her. Really a gallant man in his own curious way, he was disposed to constitute himself her champion, and went about singing her praises. His regard for her was much increased, a little later, by a report that reached him through the Misses ffennel that Eva "thought infinitely more highly of him than of other more worldly-wise men who were afraid of their religion." The Misses ffennel of course told him this to put him on his guard against the girl, who, they hinted, nourished hopes; but the Baronet ignored the hint. It occurred to him the next time he saw Eva that she was a very hand-

some person, and this impression increased to such an extent that upon reaching home one day he pronounced her name to his poodle-dog, Blackie, and starved the brute till it bowed its head. A week or two later he chanced to enter St. Peter's Church at the hour of sunset when the organ was being played, and Eva, in a resplendent toilette, was kneeling in front of the altar that contained the gorgeous reredos. His eyes were at once arrested, but he did not identify her till he had taken a few steps up the nave, when he stopped suddenly and, with his hand upon a bench-head, stood gazing at her as though she were a "vision." What struck him was not so much her beauty of face and form, great though that was, as the extraordinary depth of feeling portrayed upon her countenance. She seemed to be pouring out her soul in love of the Saviour, whose image while in agony upon the cross was engraved upon the reredos. As he stood watching her, her eyes dropped and she put her handkerchief up to them. The sight profoundly moved him, and, kneeling upon the pavement of the nave, he prayed that God would accept the love-offering of this holy woman: a singular petition and one that could not have sprung from the heart of an ignoble man—for the first time in his life he loved a woman, and he showed it by praying that her soul's desire might be gratified. His code forbade him to wait for her outside the church or to invent pretexts for calling upon her, nor would he allow himself to visit St. Peter's again for the purpose of spying upon her while she was engaged in prayer; but every day,

early in the afternoon, he entered the church and lighted a candle before the altar that had the fine reredos, and this symbolic act had reference to the saintly lady with the wistful eyes.

But though he loved Eva, Sir Ralph did not for a long while entertain the hope of marrying her; he thought that she was destined for a higher state than marriage with a mere human being, that she would become the "bride of Christ." The most beautiful, the most accomplished, the sweetest and most charming of the ladies of his house took the veil, and he thought that Eva would do so. If, however, she did not become a nun, and the weeks and months passed and she remained "in the world," he intended to offer her his hand, to marry her, for that any Catholic lady would refuse him did not cross his mind. No Catholic gentleman in England had better blood than his, for, though only a baronet, he was descended on the one side from a captain in the Conqueror's army and on the other from a line of kings. He was also a millionaire and possessed no land, an advantage in these days, as many a poor Catholic gentleman could testify.

An important rival to Mortimer and Ernest de Keramur was therefore about to appear upon the field. Both these latter had blood, one of them the purest English blood, better in a sense than Eva's own, but he had only a small income, perhaps twelve hundred a year, while the other had nothing apart from what he earned, and was an organist! A glimpse into the lady's heart, however, would have revealed the fact

that at present at all events it contained no masculine image except (it is said with reverence) that of her Redeemer; for of her piety, her personal love in this respect, there could be no question. But she was very kind and agreeable to Mortimer, and rather more than that to Ernest, to whom she was grateful. She might never have become a Catholic but for him, and therefore, as she would have said, never have known happiness and never have attained to the priceless privileges that she now enjoyed. He was often to be seen in the house in Eaton Square and occasionally in her carriage in the Park, but of course never in either place unless Lady Braintree was present. Still the Misses ffennel were not satisfied, and wanted to know what was to be thought of a young woman of rank and passable looks who encouraged the attentions of a person who played the organ, a good-looking fellow too. They spoke of the matter to Monsignor Vancelour, who said, "Dear me!" and to Father Macdonald, who turned his back upon them without saying a word, and to Father Jones, who said, "Bother!" These ladies were also aghast at Eva's shameful treatment of Mr. Mortimer, whom she was plainly encouraging in order to bring Sir Ralph to the point. Once they ventured to condole with the gentleman himself, upon which he complained of ear-ache, and, quitting them, gave vent to language.

Both Mortimer and Ernest were of use to Eva in her campaign. She was no theologian, no great hand at argument, and though, to be sure, the religion of most people is chiefly and perhaps rightly an affair of

the emotions, still her potential "converts" occasionally put questions to her which she could not answer and which she said she must consider. This meant recourse to Mortimer, who was one of the cleverest young fellows in the Catholic body, and who answered them for her. She accordingly rated his talents somewhat higher than she had done in the old days, and admitted that he was something more than a connoisseur of Chippendale and Sheraton. (She never asked him for news from Tanworth, where he frequently paid flying visits, never mentioned Lady Newark's name, and rarely alluded to Lady Caterham.) Her manner to him was frank and sometimes charming, but Keramur plainly stood higher in her regard, and his musical abilities were on the whole more serviceable to her than Mortimer's theology. Ernest worked wonders with that box of whistles of his; many a slim, modest, aristocratic maiden had advanced a step Romewards to his music; it was with the organ, moreover, that he spoke to the beautiful zealot herself. He knew how to reach her feelings, to thrill her, and he enjoyed the consciousness of this intimacy with her, this participation, as it were, in her most emotional thoughts.

But how came the clergy to permit the lady to "turn on" the organ at her own sweet will, for such an arrangement is unusual in Catholic churches, where the laity have far fewer privileges than in Protestant churches? Many people besides the Misses ffennel wanted to know why Monsignor allowed Eva this and other privileges, why he was always at her beck and

call, why she was so often in the sacristy and in the sanctuary arranging the altar decorations—why, in short, she was so much *en evidence*. As a matter of fact, Monsignor Vancelour was for a long while carried away by the tremendous energy and enthusiasm of his convert, and regarded her as a heaven-sent missionary. What she had told him about herself prior to her joining the Church of Rome in no way interfered with this view; she had been a worldling, but she had done with the world and given herself up to the work of winning souls for Christ. The history of the Church abounds in characters similar to hers, so far as he understood it. She had the enthusiasm and the love of saints, and she had something of their success; she led into his presence women, ay, and men too, who admitted that they had never regarded religion seriously until she had called their attention to it; and many of these people—not all—subsequently became Catholics and remained such. At every meeting with her he was struck afresh by her extraordinary zeal. And was he to restrain her, put obstacles in her way, clip her wings? Heaven forbid! What if he did grant her exceptional privileges; she was an exceptional woman; she had the making of a saint, if she were not already one. Her speech was modest, she was obedient, but she was very sensitive, and occasionally had fits of despondency; at the hint of adverse criticism she would be cast down and offer to "change everything," to behave like other people who were far better than herself, she said, and thought, so far as she could judge. Such radical change was

not advisable, he would tell her, but a little more prudence, a little more discretion would not be amiss. For after all he *did* try to restrain her, but in a very gentle way and so far as a commonplace priest had the right to restrain so holy a woman.

Curiously enough Father Macdonald did not regard her as a saint, nor did Father Jones ("Give me Jacktars," said this former resident of Wapping); nor did many of the prominent Catholics who attended St. Peter's Church. On the other hand, many people besides Keramur and Sir Ralph Vancelour did regard her as a saint. The attitude of general society towards her has been described. She was amazing, interesting, very handsome, and when she liked very charming; an enthusiast, perhaps "with a bee in her bonnet." Good? Who was to say? Perhaps very good and what the Romanists regard as a saint; perhaps very bad and what the Protestants regard as a sinner; more probably neither the one nor the other. Her character was her own affair; her propaganda the affair of the opposed sects. For all that, society was very curious regarding her, and Dame Gossip whispered with her ugly sister Slander.

CHAPTER IV

"THE WORLD" AT NEWARK HOUSE

ROYALTY was to be present at Lady Newark's reception, and many of the ambassadors, men prominent in politics, in the services, in society, a sprinkling of artistic and literary celebrities, and the wives and one or two of the daughters of all save the last named had received invitations.

The square was thronged with vehicles on their way to and from the house, and on either side of the gate-posts crowds of people were standing on tiptoe and craning their necks for glimpses of the distinguished guests. The scene within was very brilliant; the hall presented a dazzling spectacle of jewels, feathers, and satin dresses; exotics, evergreens, vast quantities of flowers climbed the broad staircase, up which the splendidly arrayed figures were streaming.

Royalty came earlier than had been expected, was already present, it was whispered in the hall. The exalted personage was indeed at that moment displaying his well-known affability, smiling pleasantly, saying a word or two and occasionally giving his hand to his friends as they defiled before him. There was no crowding about his person, and none of the mobbing and pushing and struggling that are often to be witnessed and felt at these big assemblies.

"The thing's well done," said Mortimer to himself,

and then, "What a fine race we are, to be sure! But how the women eclipse the men at these receptions!" The observation was suggested by the fact that the ladies were so much more prominent than the members of the other sex, looked bigger and stronger and bolder, far the finer creatures. The men were nowhere, so to speak; hidden behind skirts, bodices, tiaras, waving plumes. The ladies reigned; but their aggressiveness was only apparent, not real, and apparent only when viewed at a distance. Their speech was anything but bold, and their manners were gentle enough when observed more closely. Mortimer was struck by this, and asked himself whether there were any women in the civilized world better-mannered, more agreeable, and less brilliant than the English of his class. Meanwhile he steered his way among them, smiling and chatting, till he caught sight of Eva Fitzgower, whereupon he stopped and stared at her. Half a minute later he awoke to the fact that his immediate neighbours were regarding him with surprise, and turning sharply round he found himself face to face with the Prince. Luckily the eyes of the great man were turned in the direction in which his had lately been; when they quitted Eva and fell upon him, Mortimer had the honour of being addressed.

"Ah, the dark beauty! You're related, aren't you? Where has she been hiding herself? Where has she been hiding herself?"

Mortimer explained that he was not a relative but a friend of the lady in question, and that she had sought retirement after the death of her father.

"Ah, yes! to be sure. I remember about it"; and then the speaker suggested that Mortimer might bring the lady to him.

A suggestion coming from such a quarter was tantamount to a command, and the young man instantly complied with it, and made his way towards Eva, who was standing with head erect and in an attitude such as a general may be supposed to assume when surveying the field of battle. Dressed in deep orange satin and with her black hair ablaze with diamonds, she looked superb, radiant, triumphant; but even as Mortimer drew near her, her expression changed and that old wistful look appeared upon her face. He could guess the thought that sent it there: "Alas, how few of these people belong to God's Church! Ah, that I could convert them all!"

She allowed Mortimer to conduct her into the presence of the great man, and the next minute the pair were conversing with animation. Mortimer of course quitted them, and was hailed by an acquaintance, Sir Charles Leven, a judge of the High Court, a fat, red-faced, bald man, who said to him, "Splendid creature! Splendid creature! Wonderful arms and neck!"

Mortimer winced. He reflected that all the four judges known to him were admirers of the fair and in the habit of dilating upon their charms with an embarrassing frankness. Dreading lest his interlocutor should go on to ask him how much he imagined the lady weighed, the young man expressed his curiosity as to the subject that she and the Prince were discussing.

"She's trying to Romanize him!" said the judge with a laugh. "She's quite up to it! There never was such a woman!"

"Has she tried to convert you?"

"No. I'm too old and naughty. But she has tried it on with one of my boys—Fred—you know him, the pale one with spectacles, the tame one."

"With success?"

"Oh, I don't know! It's Rome or Reason with him, I believe. We had to keep him at home, he's so seedy, and he has developed views. I shall have to put a stop to it."

"You prefer Reason to Rome? Ah! what is Reason, by-the-by?"

"Ah, well! Fred's a very clever fellow, to do him justice. What's Reason? Well, Reason's nothing, I believe."

"And of course you prefer that?"

"Naturally!"

With the reflection that his friend's extra-judicial utterances were anything but brilliant, Mortimer passed on, and a minute later was paying his respects to a Mrs. Arbuthnot, a very frank and amiable woman. "Your cousin—is it?—your friend, then, is wonderful! Amazing!" exclaimed the lady. "She's not content with my oldest girl, but must try to drag the other over, and it's rather awkward, for you know Julia's *fiancé* is High Church, very High Church, but a hater of Rome. The worst of it is that Mr. Arbuthnot makes matters easier for her by inveighing against the Ritualists. His prospective son-in-law drives him

mad, frantic! However, he was very angry with Lady Eva and told her so; but—well, you know her way. When you say anything that isn't kind to her she looks so tragic, so beautiful, and pleads with those wonderful eyes of hers, and no man can resist her. Mr. Arbuthnot told me afterwards that he had behaved like a brute, and then, if you please, he must go and apologise to her. What happened at that meeting I don't know, but Mr. Arbuthnot said yesterday: 'Well, after all, Rome's the real thing. It's those Ritualist fellows I can't stand, and if they're to have their own way in the Church I'll go over myself and take you with me!'"

"But you might object?"

"I? Oh, I don't think it matters much! But I'm forgetting; you're a Romanist yourself. Rather a pity, isn't it? You might have let her convert you. . . . You know this lady who's approaching us, Mrs. Pelham, the little woman with a face like a nun? Husband's a very black sheep," the speaker lowered her voice. "She's one of your friend's converts. And there'll be trouble about it. Mrs. Pelham's a sort of lieutenant of Lady Eva's; she 'plants seeds'—I believe that's the phrase. See! Lady Eva's steering her way towards her. Oh, how I should like to hear what they're saying! But there's a much more serious case than Mrs. Pelham's—Lady Anne's, Lady Linlithgow's daughter. Terrible woman the Countess, Scotch, Presbyterian, feeds her children on oatmeal—haggis on Sunday. If Anne goes over they'll turn her out of doors. Oh, yes! they will—turn her out

neck and crop; sell the poor thing's clothes and give the money to that fund they've started for sending missionaries to Vienna to convert the heathen! Now don't look, please, please don't look in their direction, but Lady Anne's the thin willowy girl in red who's towering over the Turkish Ambassador, and trying to make out what he's saying to her. The old Countess would far sooner that her daughter turned Mahommedan and went into a harem—dear, dear me, how I'm running on! Come and see us—do!"

A little later Mortimer, who had very sharp ears, overheard Mrs. Pelham say to Eva: "Lady Anne begs that you will not speak to her this evening. She's having a dreadful time—dreadful! They locked her up for three days. She's praying for strength!"

Mortimer passed on with a very grave face, and a few minutes later was conversing with Lady Caterham, who looked haggard and ill. She told him that she was in trouble, and when he had expressed his concern, she asked him to escort her out of the crowd into the French room. He did so, and when they had entered the charming rococo apartment and seated themselves, she said: "You have always been so good and kind to my family; we look upon you almost as one of ourselves. Now can you help me, my dear fellow? Tanworth's widow has always confided in you."

"But she doesn't do so any longer. I suspect that Mrs. Wimpole has run her pen through my name. I got a card for this only last week, and when Mrs. Wimpole saw me half an hour ago she looked surprised. Lady Newark is going to drop me—gently."

"She told me that Father Macdonald had advised her to cultivate the friendship of Mrs. Wimpole. But can that be true?"

"It isn't at all likely."

"I wish that you'd find out for me if it's true."

Mortimer made no reply to this, and she asked, "You will help me?"

"I don't see that I can do anything. Alec might help you."

"Alec? How?"

Mortimer hummed and hesitated. "That stable—gees shuffled—Moosmeyer's stable near at hand! But really I don't know anything except what Alec has told me. There have been some strange and complicated transactions; there often are when women share racing-stables with men."

"Well?"

"Well, it occurred to me that Alec might threaten to expose her, or at all events to dissolve partnership with her, unless she gives Lady Newark up. But no, that won't do; she'll get more money by sticking to Lady Newark than by swindling Alec."

"Good gracious! Is she as bad as that?" asked Lady Caterham, whereupon Mortimer looked at her with an expression that signified: "If you're not serious, why continue the conversation?"

"There's Father Macdonald," she observed. "He's a strong man and he might still have some influence over her—for of course it's not true that he recommended this woman to her. You know I really have

respect of a sort for him. Oh, yes, I have! I am not at all bigoted against priests."

Mortimer felt inclined to say, "Then it's a pity that you attribute dishonourable motives to them." What he did say was, "Father Macdonald's influence over her has all but gone."

Lady Caterham, who had been engaged for months and months in the attempt to destroy the said influence, coloured. "But surely he'll try to win her back?"

"He may."

"You—you—might——"

"No, I sha'n't, whatever it is!" he mentally exclaimed.

"You might drop him a hint."

"To what effect?"

"That she'll slip away altogether if he doesn't tighten his hold."

"He might regard such a hint as—well, as rather unusual."

"Unusual—yes; but he would be glad to have it. I tell you, I know priests."

"So do I."

"And whatever they are, they are not fools. If Father Macdonald knew what Mrs. Wimpole's character was, you may depend upon it that he'd hurry to the rescue. He'd stop at nothing, he'd force his way to her; he'd—he'd do anything to effect his purpose. I know these priests and they're not fools."

"No; but at the same time they are not knaves."

"Knaves! I didn't imply that they were."

"Pardon me. I thought you did."

"Oh, no! They get all the money they can out of people——"

"Thieves, then."

At that she gave him just such a look as he had recently given her; it seemed to say, "If you're not serious why continue the conversation?"

But unlike her he did not want to continue it, because he knew that it would end in her asking him to execute some ungrateful commission.

"Perhaps you might try Alec," she suggested.

"I?"

"Yes; advise him to threaten the woman with exposure."

"But surely the advice would come better from you."

"He runs away when he sees me. My nephew is a moral coward," said she in a little burst of temper.

At this point they heard the sound of voices coming, as Mortimer knew, from an alcove at the head of the staircase. On his way to the French room he had observed that this alcove was not provided with chairs nor decorated nor specially illumined, that the guests were therefore not expected to find their way to it. Of course they were at liberty to do so if they chose, but as so much space had been allotted them it struck him as a little strange that the owners of the voices should have wandered to this quarter of the house. What struck him as much more strange was that one of the voices, Mrs. Wimpole's, was pitched so high that it could not but be heard in the room in which he and his companion were seated.

Not wishing to overhear what she had to say, he rose to his feet with the intention of putting the door to; but he was arrested by Lady Caterham's saying, "Leave the door open."

"But we can't help overhearing——"

"I want to overhear."

Mortimer looked at her with surprise; he had known her in the days when she was apparently the soul of honour, a typical *grande dame,* and though her degeneration had now been a process of years, he had not thought that it had reduced her to the stage at which she was capable of listening to words not intended for her ears. (A minute later he realised that the words *were* intended to reach her ears.)

"Then you'll kindly pardon me?" said he, moving towards the door.

"Leave it open," she called after him.

Upon emerging from the room he espied Mrs. Wimpole and a small group of her admirers in the alcove. The lady had a single glass inserted in her eye, and looked, Mortimer thought, if possible more repulsive than usual. But that was not the impression of her little group of friends, which included the heir to the Linlithgow peerage, brother of the unfortunate Lady Anne.

On perceiving Mortimer Mrs. Wimpole beckoned to him, and much against his inclination he joined the group.

"It's the prettiest and most romantic affair, isn't it, Mr. Mortimer?"

"Pardon me?"

"The romance of St. Peter's Church. The setting is so effective — lovely architecture, lovely altars, lovely pictures, lovely music, lovely incense, and she quite too lovely and he so handsome! You see they work together for the benefit of Mother Church, and each is intoxicated with the holiness of the other. And——" Here the speaker took the glass from her eye, lifted up her face, and with an ecstatic expression presented her lips to an imaginary lover.

Mortimer turned on his heel, and she called after him, "Isn't it true, Mr. Mortimer?"

At that he halted, his face white with anger. "No," said he. "It's an infamous lie!"

These were terrible words to address to a lady, and the moment they had passed his lips he regretted them. They startled Mrs. Wimpole and her friends, and the young sprig of nobility looked as though he were about to commit an assault upon the speaker. Mortimer was unmolested, however, and walked away with a horrible sense that he had disgraced himself; upon mixing again in the crowd, indeed, he felt grateful to the people who saluted or addressed him. He was a more conventional man than he imagined, and his act of publicly accusing a woman of infamous lying caused him more humiliation than it need have done.

"But she gets upon one's nerves," he inwardly complained. "That eyeglass! Those short skirts! The way she presented her lips! Ugh! Her morals are no concern of mine, but her manners—well, they're no concern of mine either."

He saw little of his hostess during the evening, but, so far as his observation went, her demeanour was unexceptionable; nor did he run across any of his co-religionists, though there were several of them present. His last impression, a vivid one, was that of Lady Caterham's face as she turned it towards him after bidding adieu to the Marchioness. It was so full of trouble and apprehension that he had it in his heart to pity her.

CHAPTER V

MONSIGNOR'S PERPLEXITY

ONE afternoon, about a fortnight after Lady Newark's reception, Monsignor Vancelour and Father Macdonald were in St. Peter's Church inspecting a reredos that had recently been erected in one of the chapels, when they espied Eva Fitzgower approaching them.

"Father, here comes our Bishop!" said Father Macdonald to his Superior, and then fled, upon which Monsignor frowned and looked troubled.

Eva drew near to him and asked if he could spare her a few minutes, in reply to which he motioned her to follow him, and led her through the sacristy into the small reception-room in the presbytery that had witnessed their first interview. When they had seated themselves Eva began, "I am troubled about one of my spiritual children," and then stopped on observing Monsignor's expression.

"Is the term inadmissible?" she asked with a pained look.

"It is an unusual one for a member of the laity to use."

"Lady Anne, Lady Linlithgow's daughter, is being persecuted, poor thing! I met her at Lady Newark's reception, and she sent me a message begging that I should not speak to her. She looked so sad, so thin,

indeed quite ill; but she is brave and will obey her conscience. But she tells me that after her conversion she will have to quit her home, and that none of her relatives will receive her. They are terribly bigoted Scotch people. Her father is a very rich man, but she has very little money of her own, barely enough to live upon."

"But her father would surely make her an allowance?"

"Oh no, he wouldn't; and as it was I who set the poor girl thinking of religious matters, it seems only right that I should help her a little—with money, I mean. But she must not know of it, and I want you to arrange the matter for me. I have much more money than I want."

"No," returned Monsignor. "It is not right that you should support her or help to support her. Perhaps her parents will not be so cruel as you think; if they are, I have no doubt that I could arrange for her to live in comfort with one of the ladies of the congregation."

"Oh, but I want to do this, Father!" Eva cried. "I want to help my poor converts. I want to spend my money in this way, but I cannot do so without your help, or rather, I don't want to do so without it. You might start a fund for the purpose, and only you and I need know that I was supplying the money."

Monsignor shook his head. "You want your money for yourself," said he with a rapid glance at her toilette, which certainly must have been very expensive.

"Oh, no!" said she, in the same eager tone. "I

think of reducing my expenses. My aunt would give up the house in Eaton Square but for me, and the carriages come out of my money. But I don't want the carriages, and would just as soon live in a flat. Then I spend a great deal of money upon dress—much, much too much! I have thought of always wearing the same kind of toilette, as nurses and nuns do, something very plain and inexpensive. I have several reasons for this. I don't want to appear a fashionable person, and yet of course I must go everywhere, for my mission is in the fashionable world. And then I should like it to be understood that—that—" she paused and blushed—"that I have dedicated myself to Christ, that I do not intend to marry, I mean. I have been importuned, worried, made unhappy, and quite unconsciously—God knows!—I may have caused unhappiness to good and honourable men."

It seemed that the priest was going to let this pass without comment; but after a pause he said with some effort: "Of course this is a matter in which you must obey your own heart, your own conscience, in which you need no advice; at the same time I may remind you that matrimony is a holy state and ordained by God."

This called up a look of surprise and disappointment into her beautiful face. "But I could not do half so much for the cause if I were married," said she reproachfully. "My husband would not permit me to draw so much attention to myself and indirectly to him, and to expose myself to insult and humiliation," she added, raising her voice indignantly.

The priest was about to speak, but she went on: "But I shall go on with my work in spite of what people say and think. The Cause will make no progress whatever unless we summon our courage and are prepared to encounter trouble. The majority of the English, especially those who have no religion at all, hate the Catholic Church and those who push her interests. But there are many, many people well disposed towards her, who only want a little persuasion and encouragement to join us. The difficulty is to get at them. I know how to do so—in many cases. I have far more power in this respect than I should have if I were a man. And I intend to go on with my mission in spite of the insults it brings upon me. I am trying at present to welcome the insults, to be glad to have to bear them, but I haven't reached that stage yet, though I hope to do so by-and-by. In these days women have great power if they would only use it; but they are cowards—cowards! As though it matters if one is regarded by ordinary worldlings as unwomanly, a preaching person, a fanatic,—people who think that political influence, social success, and money are the things of interest and importance!"

A thing of interest and importance is the individual character. Monsignor Vancelour was a thoroughly dutiful son of Rome, and of course desired the conversion of souls to the Catholic Church; he realised that his companion was working with great success in that direction and respected her greatly for it, thought her a saint; nevertheless he felt a very strong impulse to advise her to avoid the courses that brought the

insults upon her and to be an ordinary person—in short, to cease to be a saint. He knew that he was ridiculously inconsistent, and felt that he was utterly unworthy to be the spiritual adviser of such a lady as his companion. Meanwhile his silence was rather a damper to her enthusiasm, and she changed the subject to the music at St. Peter's Church.

"Don't you think that the choir might be enlarged, Father?" she asked. "I spoke to M. de Keramur about it and suggested that the basses were weak."

Monsignor had a crow to pluck with her about this matter, but he felt strongly disinclined to set about the process. Still he had promised one of the singers to address a remonstrance to the lady. Accordingly he began timidly, "Mr. Sprules——"

"Ah, Mr. Sprules," she interrupted, "Mr. Sprules is not up to his work and gives M. de Keramur no end of trouble."

"Has M. de Keramur complained about him to you?"

"Oh, no! but I take a great interest in our choir, Father. It gives me a great deal of anxiety. As for Mr. Sprules, I think that he is in need of a reprimand; it would be a pity to dismiss him, for his voice is so good. My complaint against him is that he is often uncertain of his part."

The priest's face wore a troubled smile. "I never felt such a coward in my life," he thought. Aloud he said, "When you have any complaints to make against the choir, I hope that you will address them to me and not——"

"Certainly, Father," she interrupted. "And, mind you, I don't advise the dismissal of Mr. Sprules."

"It would be M. de Keramur's duty to——"

"M. de Keramur and I work together."

"Work together! Work together! Really!" But it would have been cruel to continue, for the blood had rushed to her face and a very penitent look appeared in her eyes.

"I am so, *so* sorry to have been guilty of interference," she said, in her low, grave tones. "I—I do not know what to say. I am so grieved."

"It is a mere trifle," he reassured her. "Only I hope that you will not again tell one of the singers that he must take his music home and study his part."

Here there was a knock at the door. Monsignor said "Yes," and a man put his head into the room.

"I beg your pardon, Father," he began, and then stopped on observing Eva.

"Well, Miller, what do you want?"

The assistant sacristan, for it was he, looked embarrassed. "I only want to know if I am to change the candles and altar flowers for to-morrow's Benediction."

"No. Why do you ask?"

"Because a lady—because Lady Eva Fitzgower said that they ought to be changed, and ordered me to change them."

"I'll let you know before to-morrow," said Monsignor; and when the sacristan had disappeared: "We must try not to hurt Miller's feelings," said he. "He is such a good fellow, a poor clerk with a large fam-

ily, and yet he will not accept any money for his services to the church. You would be surprised at the thought and care he bestows upon the decoration of the altars. I consider myself greatly in his debt, and when I disapprove his designs I suggest rather than order that they shall be changed. He's amenable enough if he's not offended. But it's a mere trifle, a mere trifle."

The last words were uttered in response to the heart-rending look of appeal that had come to Eva's face. Her expression implored him not to go on with his indirect reproof. "It is always so, Father," she said at length. "All through my life I have made mistakes, acted foolishly, done unwarrantable things. There seems a fatality about it. I often tell myself that for the future I shall do nothing out of the way or strange, but it's no use; some enthusiasm takes hold of me and pushes me along. I now realise that I had no right whatever to speak as I did to Mr. Sprules and to Mr. Miller, but—but—oh, but I am so *immensely* interested in the choir and in everything relating to the church! I wish I could perform the music myself," she went on. "I should put my heart and soul into it. The idea that a man should sing false notes through lack of care or practice makes me—makes me mad! But I can't bear to hurt anybody's feelings. Is there a Mrs. Sprules? There is? Then do tell me where she lives; do let me help her!"

Monsignor smiled and shook his head.

"Well, Mr. Sprules has a splendid voice, deep, rich, a real bass, and he seems a good fellow, too. I have

no doubt that he has to work very hard, poor man—but the choir mustn't suffer. You will kindly consider my suggestion of a fund for our poor converts? Thank you so much." Saying which she rose, and accompanied by the priest quitted the room.

As she was stepping into her carriage she caught sight of a little man, whom she fancied she had seen frequently of late; but she forgot about him the next minute.

Upon returning to his room Monsignor meditated upon his "convert." Despite her interference in the management of the church, he still held the idea that she was a saint; the qualities she exhibited bore a striking resemblance to those attributed to many canonised women, and if she had failings so had the latter, and failings of a similar kind. She was extravagant, reckless of the opinion of the world, now high-spirited, now depressed, as they had been; and like them she was generous, sincere, intensely pious, passionately devoted to the Church, and ready to encounter persecution, to die if need be, for her religion. Now that could be said of few women in our days, he reflected. And yet he had to admit that she jarred upon him, that, to be frank, he did not quite like her. Her intensity, her feverish activity disturbed his quiet, placid nature, and even the qualities she shared with him, love of art and sensibility to the attraction, the glamour of Rome, she carried to such an excess that he recoiled from them, distrusted them in himself. He often thought that were he a layman and her father, say, or her brother, he would have persuaded

her to abandon her present courses, for he held the idea that women should not make themselves too prominent—above all, should not expose themselves to insults and humiliations. "Why not say at once that I have no appreciation for sanctity, that I like saints no more than the man in the street likes them, that I am unworthy of my office, that I am but a worldling?" he asked himself bitterly. But here he did himself an injustice; he was not a worldling, and he was not an unworthy priest; he was a typical English gentleman who had taken Roman orders; and if the qualities of a Francis of Assisi, of a Thomas Aquinas, of an Ignatius Loyola had been denied him, he fulfilled his religious duties conscientiously and with due fervour. His success, his reputation in the outer world, his prominence were due to the fact that he realised the type of Catholic priest that was most acceptable to his compatriots, and to the facts that he was handsome, well-born, and agreeable.

As a man, then, he did not quite like Eva, as a priest he could not but admire her; but the important point was not his feelings towards her but the kind of advice he should give her; and upon that he had no doubt whatever. It was his duty to encourage her, to back her up, to recommend higher and higher flights. In the recent interview he had very nearly, if not quite, failed in this duty, but he had been off his guard; in future that would not happen. To test the strength and sincerity of his resolution, he imagined her drummed out of society, disowned by her people, yelled at and pelted by the rabble, an outcast

flying to him for advice. He reflected that he himself would be protected, that he was a man, and that to tell a woman in such straits to persevere would be cowardly and cruel. But he was imagining a state of things that would probably not happen? True, but it, or something like it, conceivably might happen; and if it did? He pondered the question for some time, and then took a course that any Christian would approve: put the case to his Maker, knelt down and prayed to God for enlightenment and help.

On arising from his knees he thought himself entitled to a little diversion, and sent for Father Jones, his junior assistant priest, who soon appeared.

"Jones," said he, "tell me about your jack-tars. Some of them were *fresh* one Saturday night, weren't they?"

"They *were*," Father Jones replied, and then ran on for a time about his late penitents, speaking with the strong Hibernian accent that he had acquired at such pains. His sailors were not saints, but they were, according to him, very good fellows; they would seem to have been *fresh* pretty often, quaint in their language, and irregular in other respects; but for all that he declared that they were the best men on God's earth. He abounded in anecdotes which scarcely bore out that contention, and then began to inveigh against the "other sort," "swells," he called them. For "swells" he had an unbounded contempt; hatred of "swells" was his besetting sin, and he was in the habit of saying ten *paters* and ten *aves* every day as a penance for having wished that all kinds of misfortunes

might overtake the "swells." It appeared, furthermore, that he regarded the English as a hypocritical and un-Christlike race, and therefore a great contrast to the Irish; in short, he pronounced some very curious opinions and succeeded in amusing his harassed Superior.

When Monsignor had tired of him, he said, "Now I'm going to take Macdonald as an antidote," and thereupon sought the Scotchman, who was in his study engaged upon a work dealing with St. Teresa.

"Is the book getting on satisfactorily?" asked the Rector, and when his companion had replied in the affirmative: "I hope that you are calling due attention to her judiciousness, Macdonald, her shrewdness, her humour. She was a woman of considerable humour."

"She appears to have been a bit of a fanatic," said Macdonald, stroking his chin and looking up at the ceiling.

"She must have given a good deal of trouble to the clergy of her day."

"Oh, no doubt! I wonder they didn't accuse her of heresy—if they didn't."

"Women of highly strung religious temperaments are occasionally rather difficult to direct."

"They should be put into strait-waistcoats."

"But seriously, Macdonald, emotional women——"

"Emotional women run into all manners of excesses."

"But if their emotions take a religious turn?"

"Ah!" cried Macdonald, rising to his feet. "I see what's happened, Father! Now don't deny it," said

he, pointing his finger at his Superior. "You have been reading my '*Objective Worship*' and been converted from the error of your ways."

"The book is at my bed-head, but I have not been troubled with insomnia."

They were fond of bantering each other; indeed, the habit is common among Catholic priests, who for the most part are merry and good-humoured when in one another's company.

But Monsignor became serious. "It is a difficult and delicate task to direct the course of a saint," he observed.

"You mean a man, of course?" asked the other.

"No, a woman."

Father Macdonald looked as though he disbelieved in the existence of such a creature. "A woman saint," said he. "Difficult and delicate task; you mean troublesome. You mean the woman who enjoys the consciousness of her sanctity, who regards her religion as a luxury and revels in it, so to speak, who spends hours upon her knees while her daughters are playing in the gutter or flirting in the ball-room, and thinks of herself only. No; it isn't difficult to direct the course of such a saint as that. Tell her to spend less time in church and more time in her home."

"But that's not the kind of saint I mean."

"Then do you mean the saint who fills her pocket with dust from Knock and bids her Protestant friend wear a scapular, and then asks her why the Browns' child bears such a striking resemblance to Mr. Smith? No? Then you must mean the priest-badgerer, the

pious lady who is scandalised because Father A gives her such short penances and Father B doesn't fast and Father C says his Mass so quickly, who goes to confession every other day and remains in the box for an hour accusing herself of her virtues. No? Then perhaps you mean the saint who visited Rome in the old days and won't say what went on there lest her Protestant friends should *think*. No? Is it possible that she is the lady who is always hanging about the church and sacristy and the room of her private chaplain in the country, who darns his socks and dusts his books, and ends by persuading him to quit the errors of Rome and embrace an interesting ethical system?"

"Upon my word, Macdonald, you are very merry to-day."

"I have been reading the letters of St. Teresa. Well, your saint? Not a musical person, I hope."

"She's a lady who has every worldly advantage, who devotes herself to a work——"

"A work approved by Rome?"

"Yes."

"And disapproved by the world?"

"Certainly."

"A holy work, then. Well?"

"I was only wondering how far one ought to encourage her to persevere in the work."

"As far as possible, of course."

"But it involves her in difficulties and exposes her to insults and humiliations."

"So much the better."

"Eh?"

"I mean that the difficulties and humiliations will put her sanctity to the test."

"True."

"Where does your difficulty come in?"

"E-r. I can't remember for the moment. I must have forgotten some of the particulars."

CHAPTER VI

WOMEN AND WINE

For some days past Mortimer had been endeavouring to obtain speech of Alec Fitzgower, who had been sedulously avoiding him. Not in obedience to Lady Caterham's request, but in his anxiety on behalf of Eva's good name, Mortimer intended to urge Alec to threaten Mrs. Wimpole with exposure unless she stopped her slanderous tongue. That such a threat would succeed in its object he thought probable, but he doubted that Alec could be induced to make it. He knew that Fitzgower was annoyed at having been swindled by his partner and wished to escape from her toils, but that he would have the courage to face a stormy interview with her Mortimer doubted. Meanwhile the Catholic gentleman had been given the cold shoulder by several of his acquaintances for having publicly accused Mrs. Wimpole of lying, and he thought it not unlikely that Alec would adopt a bullying tone with him, threaten to horsewhip him, and decline to discuss the other question.

The young men chanced to meet in a club in St. James's Street, whereupon Alec exclaimed, "I'm in an awful hurry."

"You can spare time for a cigar," said Mortimer, offering him one. "I have been looking out for you

for some days past. I want to speak to you about a difficult and a delicate matter——"

"Don't! Don't!" cried his interlocutor. "I have been worried enough lately by my two-year-olds. You don't keep a racing stable, thank your stars—share one, I mean."

"If I did share one it would be with a member of my own sex."

"Oh, come! she's fairly straight—for a woman. Ah, by-the-by, I wonder you care to allude to her."

"To whom?"

"To my friend, Mrs. Wimpole, for she is my friend, you must remember that. Circumstances prevent my speaking out——"

"What circumstances, and what do you mean by speaking out?"

"Now look here, Mortimer, you had better not go on with this!" cried Alec in a threatening tone. "It has come to my ears that you grossly insulted this lady, and if I had been present I tell you frankly that —that—well, that there would have been a disturbance. However, I've come to the conclusion that I'll let the matter drop."

Mortimer laughed, whereupon Alec burst out, "Though when a man insults a lady he deserves to be hammered for it. You're a friend of my people, else——"

"If you make such a noise the waiters will overhear us. As you say, I am a friend of your people, and it's on behalf of one of them that I wish to speak to you. Your cousin Eva——"

"My cousin Eva! My cousin Eva! You adopt a confoundedly familiar tone when speaking of the ladies of my family! What business have you with *my cousin Eva?*"

"I wish to protect her from slander."

"That is remarkably kind of you, but she's not in need of your protection."

"She's being slandered by Mrs. Wimpole, whose mouth you ought to shut if you can. It's not a bit of use your pretending to be angry and adopting this hectoring, bullying tone with me. You know the sort of woman you have to deal with; you know that she has ample motive for trying to damage the reputation of your cousin Eva, or, if you prefer it, my friend Eva. The question is, Have you the courage to go to the woman and tell her to hold her tongue, and threaten that if she doesn't you'll let it be known that she's a vulgar cheat? Don't get up; don't pretend that you're going to assault me; we can't fight here. Light your cigar, you fire-eater, and think the matter over."

Mortimer was of course perfectly safe. Alec had no intention of assaulting him; he simply wanted to cow him into silence, and when he found that that was impossible he apologised in a boyish fashion for his violence. "But you know I must protect the woman," said he.

"Eva, do you mean?"

"No; Loo Wimpole. And I *can't* threaten her."

"She has cheated you. You've told me so over and over again."

"Oh, yes! she's a jade; but you mustn't say so, or rather not in public, for if you do I shall have to hammer you. You see I'm,—D—n it, man, you're not a fool, you know what all the town knows! Don't you see that I'm in an infernally awkward position?"

"No."

"Then you *are* a fool."

"Possibly. Let me see; you defray the expenses of The Nook, Moosmeyer the expenses of the house in Park Lane, Jack Carew the expenses of the wardrobe——"

"Ah! you little Jesuit, I see what you're driving at. Mortimer, I'll throw her over, I take my oath I will. I'll stamp upon her if she doesn't hold her lying tongue!"

"Very well. Tell me the result. Now there's another matter I want to speak to you about. Colonel Fitzgower and his two confederates, Vincent and Gatling, stand in need of the services of a lawyer; they'll have to pay thumping damages for libel by-and-by if they're not more careful. You might drop them a hint to that effect."

"Good old Percy! What an old fool it is, to be sure! Yes, I'll give them the hint. Shall we drop into the Phrygian? Oh! I forgot. A thousand pardons! Bye!"

On the following afternoon Alec donned riding breeches and boots, armed himself with a cane, and rode up Grosvenor Street to Park Lane. Upon reaching his destination he left his horse in charge of a boy with the warning that if he stirred an inch the brute

would let out at him with his legs; rang the bell, was told that Mrs. Wimpole was within, and was ushered into her boudoir. He entered with a swaggering gait, twirling his cane and looking very fierce, on observing which the lady laughed and nodded with approval. "So you've caned him?" she cried. "How did he take it? Where did it happen? Tell me all about it—do!"

Alec seated himself and switched his gaiters.

"Well, tell me about it," she repeated.

"Eh? What? There's nothing to tell," said he, switching his gaiters more violently.

"Then you haven't caned him?"

"No, I haven't."

"Perhaps you haven't met him? Don't—don't do that—it gets upon my nerves!"

"Met him! Oh, yes! I've met him."

"Well?—Ah, don't do that, I tell you!"

"Beg your pardon," said he, putting the cane aside. "I can't thrash a man who has done no end of things for my people—an honest little beggar, too. And—and—I've got a crow to pluck with you. I don't want you to talk about my cousin, Lady Eva. Leave her out of your romances, please. Of course you don't mean to be malicious——"

"Ah, the little Jesuit!" cried Mrs. Wimpole, showing her teeth. "He got out of it in that way, did he?"

"Of course you don't mean to be malicious," her interlocutor repeated.

"I shouldn't be too sure of that if I were you," said she, fixing the glass in her eye.

"Oh! well, in that case," he began, rising from his seat.

"Sit down," said she. "I've not said a word against Eva except that she's a saint and romantic."

"That's just the point. She isn't romantic."

"Oh! but pardon me, Nicky, she is very romantic, quite too romantic. And of course she's always running in and out of St. Peter's Church, but she's not to blame for that surely. I go there myself often; it's quite too lovely; and I come away feeling so so wicked and ready to cry. It's a wicked world, Nicky, you can't deny that."

"Footle! I won't have any more nonsense talked about her. If it pleases her to make people Romanists, that's her own concern. No one need turn Romanist who doesn't want to. I would sooner that she had gone in for something else, steeplechasing, for example—you never saw a woman with such a seat and such powerful wrists—but she has gone in for this religious business. But just understand this, please: I won't have any nonsense talked about her. Hi, there, what are you doing?"

"I'm going to ring the bell and have you turned out of the house."

"Oh, bother! Loo, will you promise not to talk about my cousin?"

"No, I won't!"

A minute later she was weeping; putting her plump little fist in her eye as a child does. She looked a child, with her dimpled milky-white cheeks and curly head; few on beholding her at that moment

would have believed that she was an utterly depraved woman.

Alec was terribly distressed, said that he was a brute, swore that he would do anything on earth for her, strangle his best friend, cane Mortimer to death if she would only stop crying.

"I-it's t-too bad n-now of all times," she sobbed, "w-when I'm s-so good, b-b-building a c-church, s-subscribing to c-charities, g-g-going amongst the p-poor!"

"Eh? I've heard something about this," said Alec. "Tell me some more about it, Loo, and dry your eyes, for God's sake!"

Upon recovering she showed him a copy of an illustrated magazine and two halfpenny newspapers. The former contained a report of an interview with Mrs. Wimpole, her portrait, a picture of the church she was restoring, and a description of the admirable work of this pious and philanthropic lady. The halfpenny papers also recommended her to the notice of the virtuous democracy. As a matter of fact, whenever Mrs. Wimpole made a "discovery" she launched out into philanthropic and religious undertakings, and of late her munificence had been more marked than usual, for she had helped herself not only to Lady Newark's money but also to that of Mr. Nathan Moosmeyer, an enormously wealthy Jew, who owned the racing stable that was in such convenient proximity to Alec's.

Well, of course Fitzgower regretted his unkindness towards so estimable a lady, expressed his repentance

and the hope that their relations might continue, and gallantly returned the salute she vouchsafed him. Upon mounting his horse a few minutes later, however, he mentally indulged in strong language at her expense.

"Now for my old fool of an uncle," said he, turning down Grosvenor Place. "Mortimer knows what he's talking about. It would be extremely awkward if old Percy got hauled up for libeling the Papists while Eva's making herself so prominent amongst them."

Upon reaching his kinsman's rooms in Queen Anne's Gate he was told that the Colonel was out, but was expected to return in a short while. Alec said that he would wait, and, asking the servant to look after his horse, entered the chief sitting-room. This apartment showed that the old soldier possessed the collector's taste. It abounded in dark oak pieces, bureaus, settees, cabinets, some of them Gothic, some Renaissance, all of them genuine and good examples of their style and date. Bronzes, brasses, breastplates, swords, scimitars, and daggers rested upon the ledges of the oak pieces; a divan with a covering of fine old tapestry was pushed into a corner of the room. Three pictures by Greuze in heavy Florentine frames adorned the walls; pieces of embroidery, old ecclesiastical vestments, hangings of Oriental manufacture were spread about the place, and a magnificent four-branched chandelier was suspended from the ceiling. The room was as full as an old curiosity shop.

"What a dingy old hole!" was Alec's comment. "What an old fool it is, to be sure!"

Well, it must be admitted that the Colonel was an old fool, and his confederates were if possible more foolish than himself. They were ridiculous persons and defied caricature. They arrived at the house in a hansom, the Colonel and Vincent springing out of the vehicle like young men. Major Gatling, who was their senior by several years, had to be helped out carefully. All three were in boisterous spirits, and had evidently been partaking of what they called the "beverage." They shouted so loud that Alec could hear their remarks the moment the hall door was opened: "Good case, that; she'll do!" "Splendid eyes, Irish eyes." "Gad, what iniquity!" "The other fellow's their great preacher, Murphy; but I don't like him and his ethical system. Still we must work him." "I've taken in the girl as my parlour-maid. She knows a thing or two about old Grimsby!"

"Sots!" muttered Alec, who belonged to a more sober generation.

However, when the trio appeared, two of them looked in a very fit condition, the Colonel and Admiral Vincent, a thick-set, powerful man with a full grey beard, dressed like his friend in a tight-fitting frock coat and varnished boots. Both men had a high colour. As for Major Gatling, he was a wreck to look at, with his dull eyes, wrinkled face, and shrunken frame, but there was fire in him yet. It was he who was exploiting the eloquent ex-priest and fierce Ultramontane, Murphy, who had recently espoused his housekeeper and with her renounced the errors of Rome.

Alec was acquainted with Gatling and Vincent, and after the introductory greetings Colonel Fitzgower said to his nephew, "This is a business meeting, but you can remain if you like. We are three old fellows and are occasionally in need of a young head." Thereupon he rang the bell, and a man brought in a couple of large decanters containing the "beverage" and placed them upon the table.

The proceedings were begun by Major Gatling, who asked the Colonel whether he had succeeded in inducing any of the Low Church or Broad Church clergy to join the Anti-Papal League. With a wry face the Colonel replied in the negative; his overtures had, without a single exception, been rejected.

"And a good job, too!" cried the Major. "We don't want any 'dodgers' (he meant by this term the clergymen of the Established Church) on the League. I thought that we might employ 'em as ferrets to clear the land of the Papist rats, but, after all, I think we're better without 'em."

"Quite so," said the Colonel, but he spoke in a disappointed tone.

Major Gatling then asked Admiral Vincent whether his overtures to the Nonconformist ministers had been accepted.

"Only by one—the man who'll be here in a few minutes. But he's a game bird—Luard Robinson."

"Well, I for one hate the 'ranters,'" said the Colonel.

"So do I. They're bounders," said the Major. "But they may help us."

Here Vincent caught the Colonel's eye, and then pointed at the decanters.

"Eh?" said the Colonel. "Put 'em away, do you mean, till the ranter's gone?"

"Yes."

"Rubbish!" cried the Major; and the decanters remained upon the table.

Dr. Luard Robinson turned up in due course. He was a grave, learned man, highly respected by Churchmen as well as by Nonconformists. His face wore a frown while Vincent presented the Colonel and the Major to him; he declared himself a teetotaler when asked to take wine; and then he sat silent with the air of a man who is about to say something that will displease his companions. "I have read the numbers of your journal that you sent to me," said he at length, addressing Admiral Vincent, "and I must ask you to remove my name from the list of contributors."

At that the Colonel and the Major exchanged glances and then looked at Vincent, who asked hesitatingly, "What—what is it you disapprove?"

"I disapprove your veiled attacks upon individuals. Your journal abounds in hints against the personal characters of Catholic clergymen, Roman and Anglican. I hear that you employ spies to watch prominent Romanists. Had I known this I should not have promised to write for you. Other information concerning the League has come to my knowledge that makes it out of the question that I should be associated with you."

"But surely if we're to attack the Papists we must hit 'em where we can hurt 'em," said Gatling.

"You can expose the fallacy of their teaching——"

"The fallacy of their teaching is apparent in their lives," interrupted Vincent.

"Of course it is," put in Gatling. "We're practical men addressing a practical people. The Papists can string words together with the best of us. What we've got to do is to show 'em up. We want to bring things to a head. We're frankly No-Popery men; we'd revive the Penal Laws and Old Noll's methods; we'd have the mass priests locked in jail or kicked out of the country. You have no idea, sir, of the atrocities practised by these Papist priests. There's Cardinal Grimsby, for instance——"

"I would sooner not hear, thank you," said the minister quietly. "I have gathered enough about the League to perceive that neither I nor any of those who think with me can be associated with it. Whether you will be successful in obtaining support from the Low Church party I know not; but I can assure you that Nonconformists will utterly repudiate your methods. No good can come of a campaign of scandal and detraction, and if you will accept advice from a man who has devoted his life to the cause of Protestant Christianity you will abandon your present enterprise." Saying which Dr. Luard Robinson rose, bowed stiffly to the three men (Alec had wandered to another quarter of the room during the colloquy), and took his departure.

There ensued a long silence, during which the warriors helped themselves to wine.

"Well, the League will be all the stronger without 'dodgers' or 'ranters,'" said Gatling at length. "We'll have to fight the battle ourselves. And now let us get to business. Balsam will be here in a minute or two, and the question is whether that paragraph about Grimsby is to go into the *Anti-Papist* or not."

"I say not," cried Vincent emphatically.

"And I say not," said the Colonel.

"If legal troubles ensue I am willing to stump up the money," observed Gatling.

"It will bring ridicule upon us," the Colonel objected.

"Well, I'm for bringing things to a crisis," said Gatling. "I have my proofs and witnesses ready. I've caught old Grimsby, and I don't intend to let him go."

"What has Cardinal Grimsby been about?" asked Alec.

"Well, there's a case of infernal cruelty against him, to begin with. A man kept in a seminary and starved into submission. There's a woman in the other case. She's in my kitchen at present. Strapping Welsh girl. Rescued only just in time."

"No one will believe her story," said the Colonel. "It may be true, but I should doubt it. I know old Grimsby and—No, no, Gatling, it isn't true, it isn't true! Grimsby isn't that sort of man."

"I have the tale from the wench's own lips," cried Major Gatling, lurching forward for the decanter. "And the man Hughes supports her—I have made him my second footman. Old Grimsby isn't the tame brute you think him. I tell you what it is, Fitzgower, and you too, Vincent, with all due respect, you're afraid of Grimsby, a wily old bird, I admit. Your game's easily quarried, Fitzgower. Everybody knows that Vancelour's a libertine. And as for you, Vincent, it seems to me that you had far better observe what's passing under your nose than go trapesing off to Italy and Spain. As though any one doubted that every man-jack in those God-forsaken countries was an idle, useless skunk! Pass the other decanter; this one's empty."

Gatling filled his glass, drained it, and resumed: "No, we must attack the enemy here, here in England. Grimsby's my bird, and I'll bring him down if it cost me every penny I possess. I'm an old soldier and I've fought for my Queen and my country. I'm a man of my word. When I say a thing I mean it. The potato-fed bog-trotting Irish I leave to others; the degenerate Southerners may be good enough for you, Vincent; I go for the free-born Englishman who has been seduced by the Romish slut. I go for Grimsby, the most dangerous of the lot. I've warned him what I'm about, mind you. He knows who I am, he knows the man he has to deal with. I don't brag that I'll have an easy job of it, but I'll turn him inside out for the benefit of my country before I've done with him, or my name's not Miles

Gatling." Saying which, the Major filled his glass for the sixth time.

"Pity he can't recognise his real enemy," thought Alec.

"Ahem, yes, quite so," said the Colonel in response to the above harangue. "Like this?" he asked Vincent, referring to the wine.

"Yes. Got much of it?"

"Enough to last me out. It came from Tanworth. My brother left it to me. After all, we old fellows have our consolations, Vincent. I'm afraid poor Gatling isn't the man he was. Can't attack old Grimsby on those lines. Absurd, d—d absurd, at his age! Ah, Vincent! we've had some good times together, but the pace isn't what it was, old man. There's no getting over that. However, we oughtn't to complain. Remember Paris in the early sixties? Poor old Emperor, what a good-natured creature he was, to be sure! He got me out of an awkward scrape one day. You knew her——" The rest of the tale was told in a whisper. "Gatling's gone to sleep," he resumed. "Savage old chap, isn't he? I don't like this nephew of mine." (Alec was walking about the room inspecting the treasures it contained.) "He's disrespectful; he calls me old Percy, and I don't like it. He takes after his father except that he's an ass in money matters; however, that doesn't matter, for he came in for William's pile, about a quarter of a million. Wild doings out in Australia in those days. Have some more port? That's right. After all, Vincent, I sometimes think we're a little

hard on these poor Romishers. Suppose that they do shake a loose leg now and again. Boys must be boys. . . . Well, what is it, Jackson?"

"Mr. Balsam has called, sir."

"Balsam? Oh, bother! Here, Alec! You see Balsam, there's a good fellow. He has come about that paragraph in the *Anti-Papist*. Tell him that the paragraph about Grimsby is *not* to go in. He can fill up the space with—let me see. Oh, yes! he'll find a paper in my desk in the office. Tell him to look for a passage I've marked with a red pencil. It's a tale about a nun and a gardener. Tell him to put that in the *Anti-Papist*. If it's too long he can easily cut it down; if too short he can add spicy details."

Alec departed to carry out these instructions, and the Colonel continued with his reminiscences of the days when he and Vincent prowled about the capitals of Europe in search of gallant adventures.

Vincent only put in a word here and there, but he enjoyed the reminiscences as much as his friend did, and drank more than his share of the wine. The amount of port this old sailor could put away without, apparently, being any the worse for it was astonishing, and in spite of his potations he kept his tight-fitting frock-coat buttoned and sat his chair as upright as a youngster. Gatling was asleep; his head had fallen forward, his face was of a purple hue, and to judge from his breathing he was fighting his enemy in his sleep.

After about ten minutes' absence Alec returned, approached his uncle, and said in a heated whisper,

"You had better pull yourself together and see this animal." Thereupon the pair quitted the room and entered the Colonel's study.

Mr. Balsam was talking to himself in a very excited manner. He was a diminutive man with sharp features, a high-pitched voice, and a ready tongue. Originally a private-inquiry agent, he had turned professional bigot, and in this capacity had been recommended to Major Gatling, who had appointed him sub-editor of the *Anti-Papist* and manager of the shop where that journal and other periodicals of a similar kind were offered for sale. "Can't be helped! Can't be helped," he was saying. "Spafford's to blame if any one. Not my fault at all events."

"Well, what do you want?" demanded the Colonel ungraciously. "Hasn't Spafford discovered anything?"

"Nothing for certain, but indirect evidence certainly points to an *affaire du cœur* between Vancelour and—and——"

"Well, and whom?"

"Er—er, I'm sorry to say with a relative of yours. Spafford's nephew's second footman to Mrs. Wimpole, and he declares that Lady Eva Fitzgower——"

"Hold your tongue and get out!"

"Yes, that's exactly what I expected. I hear that the Major's in this place, and I want to see him, please."

"You had better go away," said Alec quietly, and he placed his hand on Balsam's shoulder.

"That's an assault!" cried the wee man fiercely.

"That's an assault, sir, and you'll hear more about it! I'm not going to be bullied in this way. I demand to see Major Gatling."

The Colonel consulted his nephew's eye and then said, "If you don't quit this place I'll have you ejected."

"Oh, you will, will you? The moment I get back to the office I'll write an account of this scene and post it on to the Major. You wish to hush the thing up now, of course; but you'll have to settle with the Major. Oh, yes! I'm going. . . . Very well, then, do it! Do assault me! Now, then! So you think better of it! Very well, then, good-day to you, gentlemen!" Saying which Mr. Balsam marched noisily out of the room.

"You've put your foot in it," observed Alec with a sneer. "You insisted upon Spafford's watching the priest."

The Colonel dropped his eyes and pulled at his moustache. "Alec," said he, "my sister mustn't know of this. I'll retire from the League. I'm getting a bit sick of it. You see the sort of animal I have to deal with."

"You had better not retire at present; you must remain a member and prevent Gatling and this creature from propagating lies about Eva. Oh, they'll do it! Vincent's all right, but I wouldn't answer for Gatling. He's a monomaniac and ought to be locked up. He'll go off pop one day, that's a comfort!"

"Gatling's a soldier and wouldn't dream of slandering a kinswoman of mine."

"Well, you'll see. I believe that he is anxious to pick a quarrel with you; you're not extreme enough for him. He means business; as for you and Vincent—" The young man waved his hand contemptuously.

"You're a d—d impertinent puppy! Ah! by-the-by, and how about Loo Wimpole? Her tongue's more dangerous than Gatling's. But you've thrown her over, of course?"

"Well, no, I haven't—not exactly."

"You haven't? You haven't thrown over the jade who's spreading these lies about poor Eva? You're a pretty fellow, you are! I've no patience with you idle young dogs. By the time I was your age I had fought in a couple of campaigns. What are you going to do now? Blow your brains out?"

"I'm off! Bye, Uncle Percy." With that Alec quitted his angry relative, who roared out an oath after him.

Upon the following day Mortimer called in Grosvenor Street to learn the particulars of the meeting between Alec and Mrs. Wimpole. He was told that Fitzgower had quitted town that morning and was not expected back for months.

"I can't say I'm surprised," thought Mortimer, turning his steps in the direction of Newark House. "I have called many times upon the Marchioness and been refused admittance," he meditated; "but I'll make one more attempt to see her. Till recently she was wont to describe me as her only friend."

That the Marchioness no longer regarded him in

that light was proved a few minutes later. He was approaching the gate-posts of Newark House when a yellow barouche, in which she and Mrs. Wimpole were seated, drove past him; the eyes of both ladies were turned in his direction, but neither gave him a sign of recognition.

CHAPTER VII

"THE WAY OF THE CROSS"

LADY CATERHAM said nothing to Eva about the slanderous insinuations she had overheard at Newark House, lest she should rouse the girl's resentment against herself. She wished to maintain her present relations with her niece, of whom she had been borrowing money, and without whose aid she could not have kept up the house in Eaton Square. In the course of the past two years she had lost half her capital in injudicious investments, and it was improbable that she would ever be in a position to repay the girl, who, on her part, thought little of the circumstance, for she had a respectable fortune, some forty thousand pounds, which yielded an interest that more than supplied her wants. There was no love between the ladies, however, and no sympathy, and in view of their financial relations Lady Caterham felt that she was not at liberty to criticise her niece's actions. What she thought about them may be imagined. Here was a girl who had a splendid career open to her, who might have had suitors by the score and the respect and admiration of every one, but who ruined her prospects by her fanatical zeal. She was, moreover, as Lady Caterham reflected, a woman with a proud and sensitive spirit who must have felt acutely

the ridicule, the half-veiled sneers, and the occasional insults which her conduct brought upon her.

There was one point, however, upon which she had ventured to remonstrate with her niece, namely, her intimacy with the Keramurs. Eva called upon the Bretons two or three times a week, and frequently invited Ernest to the house in Eaton Square. Lady Caterham found the young man incomprehensible and said so to Mortimer, who described Ernest as a somewhat shadowy person. But Eva's friendship for the organist can be easily explained. Curiosity, astonishment, gratitude were the feelings with which she had successively regarded him, and the last named abided in her and was joined by sympathy and strong interest. He possessed the striking singularity that she demanded of the Catholic, he was before all things a son of Rome; his air, in her opinion, had the distinction that should appertain to a man who came of a race of saints. The records of his house abounded in miracles, legends, prophetic utterances and their fulfilment; from time immemorial the Keramurs had been in close communion with the Deity. Ernest never for an instant implied that he himself was a saint, but he held forth with pride upon the sanctity of his ancestors. He believed in all he said and in himself and in her, which after all was the chief point; he had told her that she would become great in the Church, and she had become great in it, and he venerated her, and she knew it. There was, however, no obsequiousness about him; she was exalting her house to the level his own had attained centuries

ago. Undoubtedly, he flattered her, but not by design, else she would have discovered and resented it at once; he was amazingly discreet, intensely wise in his simplicity. She liked to sit with him and his mother and discourse of Rome, Rome's history, her saints, her legends, her art; she looked forward to these visits and dwelt with happy recollection upon the pair, who seemed somehow to belong to a past age, the age of Faith. She knew what men were and winced under their glances; Ernest was pure and his eyes expressed reverence. She spoke her mind to him, knowing that he would understand and sympathise with her; described her campaign, her successes and failures, and now and then alluded to her feelings, her elation, her despondency, her humiliations. He was her "spiritual brother." She had no idea that he aspired to be something else, that he was patiently awaiting the events that were to make her his bride.

Eva was inclined to be pontifical and to criticise the action of the ecclesiastical powers, to inveigh against their lack of zeal and enterprise. Why, good gracious, if she had been in the position of Cardinal Grimsby——! But she hoped that she was not guilty of spiritual pride, and she thrust from her mind the idea that if she were to die her gown would be cut up and the pieces put into reliquaries and venerated. Ernest de Keramur would deserve a piece—but the thought was wicked and she resisted it! Meanwhile it was pretty to see the beautiful girl enthusiastically holding forth upon the Catholic Church to the pious

young Breton and his stately mother amid the crucifixes, sacred pictures, reliquaries, and symbols that filled the room. And it was significant, testifying as it did to the vigour of the marvellous old Church, to the power she wields, to the immense love she is capable of inspiring.

Ernest was making a good deal of money at this time, chiefly by giving organ lessons to Eva's friends. She described to them the pleasure and satisfaction that are to be obtained even from a moderate acquaintance with the instrument, and dwelt upon Keramur's capabilities as a teacher. To be sure, his terms were high, but for her part she thought him quite justified in demanding high payment for his lessons, and in these days everyone charged for his artistic work whether or not he was in need of money. Perhaps she did not mean to convey the impression that Ernest was a rich and important man who played the organ and gave organ lessons because he liked the work, but that was the impression she did convey, and it enabled him to obtain the high terms she advised him to charge. One day Mortimer was questioned about the "Comte de Keramur who went in for organ-playing," and was about to give a laughing reply, when he found Eva's eyes fixed upon him with a threatening expression.

But trouble menaced the girl from several quarters. When it was known that Lady Linlithgow's daughter had gone over to Rome, much ill-feeling was roused against Eva and much sympathy felt for the Linlithgows, who turned their daughter out of the house and

refused to have anything more to do with her. She had a little money of her own, but not sufficient for her maintenance, and with reluctance she accepted help from Eva, who sold her saddle-horses and added the money to the fund she had started for the aid of her "spiritual children." When Lady Caterham heard of this she was indignant and alarmed, but her remonstrances had no effect.

A week later Eva received an extraordinary affront at a reception in Piccadilly given by one of the most popular of London's hostesses. Meeting Lady Linlithgow unexpectedly, she offered her her hand, whereupon the Countess turned aside, and exclaimed to a neighbour, "Why is that woman here? Why isn't she with her priest?" and marched out of the room. The words were heard by several people who were dumbfounded at them, and they were repeated to the hostess, who was indignant that one of her guests should have been so grossly insulted. She struck Lady Linlithgow's name out of her visiting list, but she struck Eva's out also, though she liked and admired the girl.

On the following day Eva received a visit from an old lady who had been an intimate friend of her father's and who had been a witness of the scene just described. In the kindest possible way, and with many protestations of affection, the old lady implored Eva, for the sake of her good name, for her father's sake, for the sake of social peace, to abandon a course that stirred dissensions in families and led to so much unhappiness. She gave Eva credit for good motives,

and said that few if any people thought the worse of her for becoming a Roman Catholic, but she tried to make her realise the peculiar stigma that attaches to the proselytiser, who must needs be regarded by all who disagree with her as an unpleasant, a disturbing, and a very ill-bred person. "To be sure, when people first heard that you had joined the Roman Catholics and insisted upon every one following your example, they were amused and interested, and liked you all the better for your enthusiasm," pursued the old lady, "but then they thought you harmless. Now they are beginning to see that you are dangerous and consequently give you the cold shoulder. The ill-feeling against you is increasing very rapidly, I am grieved to say, and evil-minded persons are hinting scandalous things against you. You have a secret enemy or enemies trying to ruin your reputation. I know that you will forgive my saying this. Your father was my oldest and dearest friend."

Later on in the same day a Catholic friend called in Eaton Square and remonstrated with Eva much to the same effect, though not in such strong terms. The newcomer, a gossipy, kind little woman, told the girl that a priest had said to her: "Ah, poor Monsignor Vancelour! How your amazing friend must disturb him! You see he is an apostle to the rich and well-bred, and hitherto has had an easy time of it." The point of this was of course directed against the Rector of St. Peter's, but it recalled to Eva's mind certain tones and looks of Monsignor and certain words he had used at their last interview which

suggested that he was distressed and perplexed by her conduct.

She had not allowed herself to dwell upon it, but the idea had more than once occurred to her that Monsignor did not support her so enthusiastically as she had the right to expect. He did his part of their joint work right well, and their joint enterprise was very successful, but she had missed the encouragement of which she had occasionally felt the need. Perhaps he thought her an ill-bred person!

Should she abandon her mission? Or should she go on with it in spite of the obstacles that were accumulating in her path, devote all her money to the cause as well as all her energy, defy public opinion, and with the spirit of a martyr welcome the contempt and persecution of the world? Or again, should she take the veil, a course from which Monsignor had dissuaded her? With these questions unanswered in her mind she put on her plainest dress, laid aside her bangles and trinkets and all superfluous ornament, and walked unattended to the presbytery of St. Peter's.

Monsignor was at once struck with the change in her appearance. He had been used to see her in magnificent toilettes, to hear the tinkle of her bangles when she moved, to be aware of her stately carriage, and, more subtly, of her immense vitality; and he felt a shock upon observing her plain dress, her chastened manner, the look of trouble in her eyes, her air of defeat.

"I ought to tell you, Father, that I am helping

Lady Anne in spite of what you said, and have started the fund of which I spoke when we last met. I have sold my horses."

"You were fond of riding?"

"Ah, yes!" said she with a sad smile.

"Er—you will not deny yourself all healthful pleasures? Do you contemplate reducing your expenditure in other ways?"

"I am in doubt; I am trying to make up my mind, to decide upon my future course. I want you to help me, Father, for I feel that I have come to a crisis in my life."

"You find it difficult to persevere? You've been encountering fresh troubles? Remember that you are winning souls for Christ, doing a holy work. I trust that you will not abandon it."

His tone was so much more encouraging than it had been of late that she glanced up at him with surprise.

"I shall not abandon it, but—but—— Ah, but what they think of me! It is not the rudeness and slights and sneers; I can put up with them. A fanatic, a preaching woman, I don't mind being called such names. It's those glances that distress me, the glances in which good women and upright men tell me that I am forfeiting their respect, that I am unworthy to be among them, a disgrace to my class, an ill-bred woman. I could put up with the hatred of the world or with active persecution, and I do put up with affronts; but it's the contempt, the silent contempt of quiet, good people, some of them old friends of my family, that I find so hard to bear.

I don't think that you can realise what this means to a woman, Father. She expects a certain respect, a certain homage, a certain tribute to her sex. When I move towards the door I intercept a glance that seems to say, 'Don't open it for her. She is creeping into families, setting mothers against daughters, seducing the minds of weak youths and maidens!' They deny me courage and whisper that I am an underhand person, more dangerous and quite as vulgar as the men who preach in the Park. Ah, courage! My black mare Bess did something for my reputation in that respect! I should like—— And the thought of my father troubles me. How it would pain him if he could see those glances! He liked people to admire—— Perhaps my life in those days unfitted me for this work, and I am too sensitive and feel things too much. I have horrible temptations to retaliate, to strike back, to ridicule my detractors. It would be so easy! That charge of cowardice and those glances of contempt torment me. I feel inclined to reassert my old power, to make people regard me as they used to do. It would be so easy! I could—God forgive me for saying it!—get many of these people in my power, the men especially, and it is they who have made me suffer most by their half-veiled insults; I could bring them to my feet were I to employ the means. I do not dwell upon such ideas, I drive them from me; they are horrible and degrading; but they occur to me when I am wounded. I am sinful and weak; when I am struck I feel inclined to strike back with my sex's weapons. I do

not like to be regarded as a coward, for I am not a coward. Social life appears so different to an experienced woman from what it appears to a careless man. She sees so much more than he does: the rudeness, the impertinence, the cruelty, the horrible insinuations that lurk in a smile, in a movement of the shoulder, in what appears an ordinary remark! When people's feelings are roused against one, as they are roused against me, they have a hundred ways of showing it. I hope that you will pardon me for running on in this way, Father; I have come to a crisis in my life, and I want you thoroughly to understand me."

She had frequently paused during the sentences of this speech and changed her tone; when confessing to her weaknesses she had spoken in a soft voice and shown some confusion.

Monsignor was not surprised at anything she had said, nor was his opinion of her reduced by it. They who suffer temptations and overcome them stand higher, according to the Church's teaching, than they who are not tempted. This was a proud and passionate woman who could have brought the world to her feet had she chosen, but who devoted her powers to the service of religion. The type was a fine one, from the Catholic point of view, and his judgement of it was not affected by the unfortunate circumstance that he was not personally attracted by it. He perceived that "the world" had found out her sensitive spot, discovered how to torment her by impugning her courage.

"I do understand you, my daughter," he began in his quiet way. "Upon entering the Church you wished to show your gratitude to God by devoting your energies to His service. You wanted to be something more than a mere ordinary Catholic gentlewoman; you wanted to do a great work, and you were willing to sacrifice your worldly prospects to it. Many ladies who entertain this noble idea take the veil, but I have advised you against that course. I do not think that you are fit for a convent life; to speak frankly, I think that if you entered a convent you would soon come out of it—though not, of course, if you had taken the vows. By this I do not mean to imply that your zeal is less than that of most nuns, but that it is of a more active, stirring kind. If it were possible you would put on armour and with sword in hand go forth and do battle for Holy Church——"

"Ah, that I should!" she cried with glistening eyes.

He smiled, glad of the diversion. "But that is not possible; besides which the Church does not overcome her enemies with the sword."

"She often did in the Middle Ages."

"Perhaps not always wisely," said he. "And, after all, we do not wish to overcome her enemies, but to win them to her, and this is the work upon which you have been engaged. Now you have been astonishingly successful; I have never known anyone who has brought so many people to the Church as you have; and from this I conclude that your decision to

undertake this work was prompted from above. But the melancholy fact remains that the world hates you, must hate you, for doing such a work. The so-called proselytiser is as bad as a criminal, worse than many criminals, in the opinion of those who differ from her. You are disseminating evil, corrupting, seducing weak minds, according to the Protestant, the Dissenter, even the Agnostic. They think you underhand, ill-bred, cowardly, crafty, un-English. I and some others think that you are advancing the interests of truth, that you are very courageous and logical, and that your methods are as open and above-board as they can be. But we are in the minority. Ah, my daughter, we are in a minority among our own body! God will reward you in the hereafter, your converts will be grateful to you, your conscience will approve your action, but you must be content with that. You will be made to suffer more than the nun has to suffer, and your high spirit, your character, your temperament, your training render you peculiarly liable to the sort of pain you will have to bear. I feel it my duty—and I have pondered the matter—to advise and encourage you to persevere; but you will fail, you will break down, unless you can attain to a spiritual state which is beyond the reach even of most pious souls, the state in which you can welcome pain, humiliation, and the contempt even of good people for Christ's sake."

She remained silent, and he went on again: "Nor may you take refuge in spiritual pride, which is grievously sinful, nor despise your co-religionists

because they are less zealous than yourself, nor exult in the thought of your power and success. It were far better that you abandoned this work than that you allowed it to stir such feelings in you. You have an insidious foe, my daughter——"

"Oh, but, Father, you are too hard!" she cried. "You expect too much! I'm only a woman!"

"There are other good works that you could engage in besides that of making converts," he went on, without heeding her interruption. "You could join Lady Purley in the East-end and spend your time among the poor, employ your energies and some of your money on their behalf. That is a very charitable and holy work. Lady Purley, as you know, is an admirable Catholic lady. Everyone, whether Catholic or Protestant, respects her."

"Ah, yes!" said Eva bitterly; "society respects her; me it despises; but she has not to suffer as I have to suffer."

"Perhaps not."

"And surely the more we suffer——"

"I should not dwell upon that thought," he interrupted.

"But why not? I want to suffer for the Church, to make some return to her. I love her. Do, do realise that! I want to prove that I love her. A wife worthy of the name is ready to sacrifice herself to her husband's interests, a mother to her child's interests. I wish to be a Catholic worthy of the name. I will join Lady Purley to-morrow, if you advise it, if you think that I shall be of greater

service to the Church by doing so than by continuing with my present work. I will abide by your decision, Father."

Monsignor meditated for a while, his brows working. At length: "No," said he, "I cannot conscientiously advise you to throw up your mission. I almost wish that I could, but I cannot. I encourage you to go on with it till—till—while you have the opportunity."

"Ah!" she cried, "till I am ostracised, till doors are shut in my face!"

"Yes," said he.

"And then?"

"Then you will seek some other way of doing God's work. Having forfeited your position in society, you will be ready to make other sacrifices; you will choose the most difficult, the most ungrateful tasks, from which everyone but you will shrink. Your life will be an utter failure from the worldly point of view, and I doubt that you will have posthumous fame. Your name may never be written in the history of the Church, you may not even win the admiration of the majority of your Catholic acquaintances; you are forbidden under heavy penalties to indulge in spiritual pride, constantly you will be tempted to think of and regret all that you have lost through your own deliberate choice; but if you persevere you will be a true follower of Christ, a loyal, logical Catholic."

After a pause he went on: "But, as I have often told you, the Church by no means imposes such harsh

and difficult tasks upon her children. They—you voluntarily undertake them."

"Yes," said she. "My mind is made up. I have told God that I am ready to die for Him; but He seems to tell me that He does not want me to lose my life, but to lose the love and respect and good opinion of everybody—my family, my friends, whether Catholic or Protestant—for His sake. I seem to understand it all," she went on in a tone of resigned sadness. "My tale is a very simple and unimportant one when regarded aright. God is disciplining me. He placed me in a high position and gave me more of the good things of life than He gives to most women, and I enjoyed them and forgot all about the Giver. Then He sent me troubles—ah, what troubles!—that made me think of Him. But the old spirit revived in me; because the world had become hateful to me I would serve Him, but only on my own conditions; I would ignore His warning, and hate, and, so far as was within my power, persecute His Church if she did not receive me on my own terms. I would keep my pride whatever happened. And then my pride was humbled and I submitted. But again the old spirit revived, but in a less gross form. Having become a Catholic I would be a prominent Catholic, *the* Catholic, and, since you advised me against entering a convent, *the* Catholic laywoman, and I did a Catholic work and my co-religionists distrusted and disliked me for it. Still the work was successful, and I felt that I had the right to the respect of my friends and acquaintances; at least they would give me credit for

courage, I thought; but that is the very quality which they deny me. And the process will, I feel, be continued; I shall be humbled again and again; the bad in me will be continually coming to the fore in some new shape, and God in His mercy will not cease to remind me of it and help me to check it. He has promised us another life; He will not allow me to fix my attention upon this one, and I should thank Him. I do, but I am unhappy, and that shows me that I am weak. Strong souls do not, I fancy, suffer so much as I suffer. Perhaps He will think of that when I die—perhaps a little before then!"

Tears gathered to her beautiful wistful eyes as she concluded, but she brushed them away, and thanked the priest for his advice and for his patience with her.

"God bless you. Pray for me," were his final words.

CHAPTER VIII

CARDINAL GRIMSBY

CARDINAL'S HOUSE was not a cheerful-looking building when viewed from the outside, nor were its vast apartments suggestive of domestic comfort. The chief reception-room was bare and gaunt, without cornices or enrichment of any kind; a Bishop's throne hung with red curtains projected on one side, an American organ stood in a recess, and in the centre was a large table, upon which there lay four or five huge books in red bindings.

At about five o'clock one afternoon his Eminence, dressed in a shabby black cassock with red buttons, was pacing this room with his hands behind his back. He was one of the most striking-looking men of his time. The upper part of his head was massive and out of all proportion to the drawn-in, kite-like, lower part; his high, broad forehead and piercing eyes suggested intellectual qualities of a very unusual order, and his thin lips, drawn tightly together, seemed to betoken secrecy and tenacity of purpose. Age and a habit of asceticism pushed to the extreme limit of human endurance had reduced his figure almost to a skeleton, and his head looked like a skull with brilliant flashing stones inserted in the eye-sockets. Two of his peculiarities were very noticeable: his habit of moving his shrunken jaws up and

down, which suggested that he was chewing the cud, and his habit of punctuating his remarks and thoughts with a sniff, "which warns you," he was wont to say, "that I have homicidal mania!"

Presently he rang a bell that was answered by a man who bore a name even more distinguished in the Church's annals than his own, and some minutes later Monsignor Vancelour was ushered into his presence.

The Rector, like his host, had the priestly air and looked an ecclesiastic to his finger-tips, but in many other respects the men presented a contrast. Monsignor was a little inclined to stoutness, and slow and stately in his movements; his fine features were as a rule at rest and his expression was benign. Cardinal Grimsby, on the other hand, was quick, almost agile, in his movements, despite his great age; the muscles of his face were rarely at rest; in him was impersonated the untiring energy of the ancient Church. His expression was at times extraordinarily stern and inspired awe; but he was very gracious in ordinary social intercourse, and to the very young and very old, to the poor and downtrodden, he was wonderfully gentle and kind. On the other hand, more than one strong man and proud woman had quaked for fear in his presence.

The Cardinal regarded Monsignor with a searching glance, in which dislike and suspicion were evident, and irony just discernible. Monsignor met it with an impassive face; came forward, bent and saluted his Eminence's ring, and then stood in a stiff formal attitude. The Cardinal motioned him to a seat, and

broke silence by observing, "I wish you to see the design for my new Cathedral." With that he took up an architectural drawing and handed it to his visitor.

"Ah, the Votive Church at Vienna!" exclaimed Monsignor.

"You had not heard that I had chosen that design? No? Aristocratic Rome is not interested in so trifling a matter? But does the design please you?" he asked in a more gracious tone.

"Yes," said the Rector simply, "I think it a fine design."

"But it is a little stilted, eh?—a little pretentious?" He took up the drawing. "It is a tall man on tiptoe," said he, glancing at it. "And that," he added, pointing to a window whence the towers of Westminster Abbey were visible, "is a giant in repose. Disquieting rumours have come to my ears," he went on quickly, putting down the drawing, and pacing the ground in front of Monsignor. "You must be on your guard, more circumspect. Lewd men, wine-bibbers, the enemies of the Church are on your track. And you must rule your flock with a firmer hand. Complaints have reached me. I have banished women from the choir. They need repression; they would like to push ahead in God's Church and pull the strings and set the clergy dancing. That must not be permitted. A lady of deep conviction and great zeal has joined the Church and drawn much attention to herself. She is no doubt a noble-minded Catholic, but she is impulsive, I am told,

injudicious and imperious in her methods. Women in these days are ambitious and hope to achieve great things without the necessary training. Sanctity, spiritual distinction, is not to be attained without severe discipline. The drawing-room queen of last week suddenly changes her mind and aspires to rule in the Church; she presses the clergy into her service, directs the church officials, selects the music and ceremonial. She has a commanding personality, a strong will, er—er (he sniffed several times) personal charm, and she induces her friends to follow her example and join the Church. Her motives are good, she is sincerely anxious to do God's work, but to do it in her own way. Such a woman needs a strong director. She is young, she is—she is a woman, she is an aristocrat!"

"I know of course to whom your Eminence is referring," said Monsignor in an expressionless voice. "But you do not wish me to discuss the lady, I feel sure."

"No."

"Then may I ask what is the drift of your Eminence's remarks?"

"In the first place I wish to convey a reproof to you," said the Cardinal, halting and looking into his companion's eyes. "You have allowed this lady privileges that you should not allow to a member of the laity. I understand that she is in the habit of giving her orders to your organist and your sacristan, of criticising and interfering with the arrangements of the church. I understand that you postponed one

of your retreats for women at her request, and that many people who had arranged to attend it were put to serious inconvenience. It is said that you devote so much time to her that you have none to spare for others whose claims upon you are as urgent as hers. The lady is too much *en evidence* at St. Peter's."

A little colour mounted to the Rector's cheek, and he dropped his eyes and was silent for a while. When he spoke his tone was quite calm. "It is true, your Eminence, that I have devoted more time, more thought, more care to this lady than to any other member of my congregation, and if she has interfered with the church arrangements, I am to blame, for she could not have done so without my consent. And I feel that I am to some extent to blame, and of course I shall keep your reproof in mind. But I would ask your Eminence to consider the case of a priest who finds himself the director of a lady of deep piety and great spiritual power, who is ready to sacrifice all that she possesses, and has already sacrificed much that she possesses and treasures, to the holy work of winning souls for Christ. She has brought more souls to the Church than anyone with whom I am acquainted. Her power of impressing people with the truth of Catholicism is so great that I must conclude that she is in some special way inspired by the Holy Spirit. Her success is extraordinary."

"I hear that the persons she brings to you for instruction join the Church."

"The majority of them do."

"And remain in the Church?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Cardinal, resuming his walk. Suddenly he stopped and asked, "You regard her as a saint?"

"I do."

"And you have an acute sense of your responsibility as her director?"

"Yes."

"You might advise her to seek counsel of Father Macdonald. He might relieve you of the responsibility."

The suggestion could not but wound Monsignor. He frowned, coloured, and kept his eyes upon the ground. Raising them and speaking in a calm voice, he said, "I will give her that advice."

A silence lasting a couple of minutes ensued. The Rector kept his seat, the Cardinal paced the room, moving his shrunken jaws up and down and sniffing at intervals. Suddenly he halted, rang a bell, and asked his servant to bring him a sealed envelope that lay in a bureau in the library. It was handed to him in due course, and he passed it on to Monsignor, asking him to open it and read the enclosures. The Rector took two newspaper cuttings and a page from a journal from the envelope, and began to read them, while the Cardinal's eyes remained fixed upon him in a searching gaze.

At first Monsignor seemed amused at what he read, and then perplexed; then he put the newspaper cutting aside and glanced into space as though he

were making a call upon his memory. He then turned to the second newspaper cutting, read it very slowly, and laid it aside, frowning in anger. While reading the page from the journal, his expression remained the same but increased in intensity. It was an expression of mingled indignation, astonishment, and horror. Twice he seemed about to speak, but checked himself; at length he rose and walked about, presumably to calm his mind; returned to his seat, put the three extracts back again into the envelope, again rose, approached the Cardinal, and handed him the packet. His first effort at speech was a failure; the next moment he managed to say in a voice that shook: "Your Eminence can spare a priest for St. Peter's?"

"You must remain there for the present, Monsignor."

At that the Rector meditated for a while, but he said nothing more; he bent and saluted the episcopal ring, and took his departure.

Again the Cardinal paced the room, moving his thin jaws up and down and sniffing.

Some five minutes later he rang and asked if M. de Keramur had come.

"Yes, your Eminence," said the servant.

"Then bring him to me."

The Cardinal's reception of the young Breton was not only gracious, it was affectionate. He hurried forward on seeing him, and Ernest also accelerated his movements, with the result that he slipped on the highly-polished floor and nearly lost his balance.

"My son, this is not a skating-rink," said the old man, presenting his ring to the visitor. "I hope that I have not taken you from your work. No? Sit down. I have got something for you, something to refresh the inner man; for we must resume our quarrel, my son, and I do not want to take you at a disadvantage."

It was a rare honour to be waited upon by one of the most famous prelates of the century; but Ernest and Cardinal Grimsby were old friends, old enemies, his Eminence would have said. As the most able Roman Catholic organist in the metropolis, Keramur was frequently engaged to play at other churches besides St. Peter's on the days of their titular feasts, occasions when the Cardinal, as a rule, was present at them. After Mass his Eminence would send for Ernest and banter him upon his music, whereupon the young man would defend himself with much spirit, to the astonishment of the bystanders. He knew how "to take" the Cardinal, who had a genuine regard for him and for many other young men who were proud of their religion and led chaste lives.

It was pretty to see the wonderful-looking old priest wait upon his young guest; but it must be confessed that the "refreshment for the inner man" was of a very unsubstantial kind. The two milk biscuits would have done very well, considering the hour, if a glass of magnificent old port or Madeira, such as one would naturally expect to get at the house of a Cardinal, had been forthcoming. But it was not: in its stead was a glass of orangeade!

However, it was perhaps some consolation to Keramur to know that the decoction was made from the Cardinal's own recipe, and that the great man himself enjoyed it. Indeed, he attributed his good health in a measure to his imbibition thereof, and strongly advised Ernest to drink it at his meals.

When Keramur had eaten the biscuits and drunk the orangeade, the Cardinal resumed his walk. Presently he said: "Let there be peace between us, my son, this afternoon. I am going to beg a favour of you. But of course it is understood that the music of Mozart and Haydn and Beet—Beet——"

"Beethoven?"

"is profane, music of the concert-room, music that should not be heard in the Church of God, music that appeals to the riotous emotions."

Here Ernest made a sign of dissent, to which the Cardinal paid no heed.

"And I am glad to know that you have joined my Society of St. Gregory."

Keramur raised his brows at that; he hadn't joined the Society, and was about to say so when the prelate halted and bent a severe glance upon him. "I have observed you at our meetings," said the old man.

"Yes," said Ernest; "but I haven't joined the Society."

"Ah! but of course you will join it."

"No, your Eminence, I cannot join it."

"Why not?"

Keramur hesitated. "I—I must ask your pardon. I——"

"My son, you were not wont to be timid."

"Well, your Eminence, the fact is that some of the prominent members of the Society are in the habit of talking and writing a great deal about Church music, laying down the law, and condemning those who disagree with them, when all the while they are ignorant of the rudiments of the art of music!"

This was bold enough, in all conscience. The prelate pondered it. "They are ignorant of the rudiments of the art of music," he repeated. "Now that's very sad. You must take compassion upon them. I have just said that I was going to beg a favour of you. I want you to help the Society. It meets once a month in this room, and I shall be grateful if you will attend the meetings and play the American organ for us."

Keramur said that he would be delighted to do so, whereupon the Cardinal took a seat near him, and observed in a confidential tone, "The fact is, that our organist plays excruciatingly out of tune."

"He is certainly not a good player," returned Ernest; "but pardon me, your Eminence, a man cannot play out of tune upon a keyed instrument."

The prelate started and seemed displeased; he looked the young man in the face and said quietly, "*Non credo.*"

"But it is impossible," Ernest insisted.

"Remember, my son, I did not assert that it was *you* who played out of tune."

"No; I remember that. But we must be fair to the other man. A violinist can play out of tune: he

makes his own notes; an organist cannot: the notes are made for him."

Keramur spoke too vehemently, perhaps, to his venerable disputant; but the Cardinal did not frown; he merely looked at his interlocutor and repeated, "*Non credo.*"

"Will your Eminence kindly allow me to prove my words?" And upon receiving a nod of assent Ernest rose from his seat and drew near to the American organ.

There was a smile upon the grim visage of the old priest, but he would not admit that he was in the wrong. All he said in response to Ernest's practical proof was: "You are not the other man. No doubt *you* cannot play out of tune. Anyhow I am grateful to you for your promise of help. I understand that you are very successful in your profession, that you have many pupils."

"Yes, a great many."

"One enthusiastic pupil brings another, I suppose. One pupil, for example—eh?"

"Ah! your Eminence is right. One pupil has brought me many other pupils. She is herself an excellent organist. You have, of course, heard of her—Lady Eva Fitzgower?"

"Yes."

"She is the foremost Catholic lady of her time!" cried Ernest.

"Have you the honour of her friendship?"

"We are great friends. She is doing a splendid work for the Church."

"Really?"

"Why, surely your Eminence has heard about it?" cried the young man. "She is bringing back the English to the Faith! She has the most extraordinary power! She carries everyone away with her, like the saints of old; she is quite evidently inspired. When I first beheld her I knew that she was destined to do great things for the Church. I told Monsignor so, I told her so. She has been selected by Providence to effect the conversion of this great race. People laugh at me when I say that, but your Eminence will not laugh. She is the St. Catherine of a later age. My mother and I have never believed that God would allow the English to remain in error, for they are a noble and a deeply religious people. But the Catholics have no energy, no courage; they try to be like other people, whereas they ought to be quite different from them. This lady is a Catholic worthy of the name."

The young man's simplicity pleased the Cardinal, but his Eminence's thoughts soon turned to Eva, about whom he had almost made up his mind. She was a force, he thought, and had in her the makings of a saint, but she had been mismanaged, misdirected by Monsignor Vancelour. Organists and noble ladies, dukes and dustmen were better simple, and the simpler the better; prelates of the Church had to be subtle; Monsignor Vancelour occupied an important position, but he was a weak ecclesiastic, and a source of danger.

"Ah, well, my son! *we* are chiefly interested in music at present," he observed. "I have been think-

ing over what you said. You see I was once a fiddler. You are not? No? Ah! then you will not be able to realise what an acutely sensitive ear the fiddler has. If a note is in the slightest degree 'out' he is infinitely distressed. This is not the case, or at all events not to the same extent the case, with the organist. But I want you to repeat what you said about the keyed instrument. Come, my son."

Thereupon Keramur repeated his explanation, which would have been intelligible to a child, and the Cardinal listened attentively to it.

"Your argument is plausible," said he. "I must consider it. So a keyed instrument cannot be out of tune? Do you know, my son, I am afraid that you are in the wrong after all. This instrument, for example——"

"Is horribly out of tune," put in Ernest, losing his patience a little; "but it would not be right to say that I was *playing* out of tune."

"It would not be kind," said the exasperating old man. "I have told you that I shall consider your view and perhaps I may in time adopt it. Meanwhile buy a fiddle. Your sense of hearing is not so acute as it might be. Thank you for your promise of help. In alliance you and I will be irresistible. God bless you, my son!" And he accompanied the young man to the door, smiling at him as he took his departure.

The smile might be interpreted: "Good little boys should not be disputatious when dignitaries of the Church make trifling mistakes!"

CHAPTER IX

THE SCANDAL

THE first of the newspaper extracts that Cardinal Grimsby had handed to Monsignor Vancelour was entitled, "Fracas at a Club," and described a charge of assault brought by a club official against Colonel Fitzgower and Major Gatling. There was no defence. The two military gentlemen had quarrelled and come to blows, and the waiter in his attempt to separate the combatants had received blows from one or both of them. It was not contended that the blows had been meant for him, but the evidence that he had received them was to be seen upon his face. In the Police Court he had shown an eager desire to acquaint the magistrate with the cause of the quarrel between the retired guardsmen, but his Worship had told him to be silent upon that matter, and had brought the case to an end as quickly as possible.

The second of the extracts handed to the Rector by his Eminence described an interview between the club waiter and a representative of the *Comet* evening newspaper, who elicited a story that may be told briefly as follows: Colonel Fitzgower and Major Gatling frequently dined together at the club and then adjourned to a small card-room, where they were occasionally joined by a naval gentleman. The

three friends had founded a league, the Anti-Papal League, with the object of resisting the encroachments of the Romish religion in this country; they had also started a journal entitled the *Anti-Papist*. Their deliberations were as a rule conducted in a friendly spirit; but after the third decanter of port had been served them they were apt to make a great deal of noise. Upon the evening in question a dispute had arisen between the two military gentlemen regarding the niece of one of them, Colonel Fitzgower, the Major declaring that she was on terms of intimacy (only he used a coarser word) with a well-known Roman Catholic priest. The Major went on to say that as this pair were pushing the interests of the Romish religion with great success, it was the duty of the League, through its journal, the *Anti-Papist*, to acquaint the world with the nature of their relationship. At this point the naval gentleman quitted the room. The Colonel thereupon threatened to desert the League, to which the Major returned that he might do so or not as he pleased, but that the relationship between his niece and the Romish priest should be shown up in the *Anti-Papist*. The Colonel then roared out an oath, upon which his companion hurled a decanter-stopper at him, hitting him in the cheek. Here the waiter entered and remonstrated with the irate warriors, who paid no heed to him; indeed, while he was speaking, the Major went for his antagonist, who was a younger and much more powerful man. The waiter then rushed between the pair, and received the blows that stunned him.

The paragraph in the journal, which had so profoundly moved the Rector at Cardinal's House, was the work of the lady who wrote under the name of "Goodie." It appealed to lovers of the romantic, demanding their sympathy on behalf of the priest and the lady whose attachment had led to the disgraceful encounter between the two military men. "Goodie," as most people knew, was Mrs. Wimpole.

Late one evening, a few days after Monsignor's visit to the Cardinal, the Bishop of Winton called in Eaton Square and was ushered into the presence of his sister.

"Is Eva here?" he asked, without any preliminary greeting.

"No; she is dining out with Emma [Lady Braintree]. Ah, you have bad news! What is it?"

Her brother handed her a paper, indicating an extract under the heading "Police Court Intelligence."

Lady Caterham's forehead worked angrily as she read. "Ah! a fight. A vulgar brawl!" she cried, and putting the paper aside she gave vent to a hollow laugh. "Have you seen him? No, of course you haven't. He has run away. But what was the fight about?"

Without a word the Bishop handed her a copy of the *Comet*.

She was silent a moment after she had read it, and then she burst into a torrent of reproaches against her niece. "Oh! she's mad—mad!" she cried. "She has brought this upon herself by her ridiculous con-

duct. Everybody will believe it. She's ruined! ruined!"

"Oh, no," said her brother. "No one will believe it."

"Everybody will believe it."

They discussed the matter for some minutes, the Bishop calmly, his sister vehemently. "Well, you must take her in hand," said Lady Caterham. "I have done all I could to save her from her suicidal folly, but she never pays the slightest attention to what I say. You had better take her to Winton—if she'll go. Oh! but she's logical enough," the speaker went on in a sarcastic tone. "She thinks of the other world; all religious people do so, or should do so. She'll be glad that her name's tarnished; she'll accept it as a cross!" And in her irritation and bitterness Lady Caterham went on to inveigh against religious people, who, if sincere, must needs be unpractical, unsuccessful, and exasperating.

When at length the Bishop managed to lead her away from the subject, she spoke of her anxiety regarding Lady Newark. "I meet her occasionally and she's polite enough, but she's out when I call and deaf to my appeals. That set is preying upon her. Alec has quitted the country; the partnership between him and Mrs. Wimpole has come to an end, and she has joined Moosmeyer; but Tanworth's widow practically keeps up the stable. They swindle her, of course. Little Newark is living in North Kensington; I called at the house, but was not allowed to see him. But we must think of Eva.

What's to be done with her? Reason with her, you say? That will do no good."

"We must point out to her the consequences of her rash conduct. We must call her attention to this horrible news, make her realise what it means, and persuade her to leave town or even the country for a while. If she has not lost her senses she will listen to us. Again, we might point out to her that in the long run she will probably do more harm than good to the Romish Church. With regard to Tanworth's widow and Mrs. Wimpole, I fancy that you are exaggerating, my sister. Mrs. Wimpole may not be in all respects an exemplary woman, but she is received at Court and mixes in good society, and I decline to believe that that would happen if she were the depraved character you represent her to be. I do not go out much nowadays, but I have no reason to suppose that society has become corrupt. English gentlemen and English ladies, those I mean who set the standard in matters of taste and manners, would decline to receive an abandoned woman. No, no, you are mistaken, Helen. Take my word for it, the woman is far better in Mrs. Wimpole's hands than in the hands of the Romish clergy. Ah, my sister, we are an unfortunate family! God in His inscrutable wisdom has allowed blow after blow to fall upon our house. Luckily the work of the diocese leaves me little time to dwell upon my private sorrows. Arthur has entered a Jesuit college in Belgium! Think of what that means to me! My wife lives in Rome and indulges in the grossest superstition. Ah! poor

Hood is a true prophet, and our brother Percy is not so ridiculous as we are apt to think him. The Romish Church is the great foe. I believe her power to be greater now than at any time in the century; a third of the clergy of my diocese are propagating Romish doctrines, but they elude me, their methods are so subtle, so underhand. The majority of them, I must do them the justice to say, are not conscious of where they are drifting, or that they are preparing the way for Rome's triumph. Atheism, the rankest materialism is, I firmly believe, less offensive in God's sight than Romanism, which indeed is materialism of the most loathsome kind. But no one heeds me. My brother bishops regard me as a noisy demagogue."

At this point a servant entered and handed Lady Caterham some letters on a salver. "Kindly pardon me," said she to her brother, and selecting one of the missives she opened the envelope and glanced at the enclosure.

If the Bishop's eyes had been upon her he would have observed that she was pleased by what she read, and even as it was he noticed an improvement in her tone when she next spoke. "Ah! well, we must make the best of things," said she. "Perhaps you are right and people will not pay much attention to those paragraphs. I don't think we need trouble Eva about them; she will probably see them and dismiss them from her mind as unworthy of consideration."

"I think we ought to warn her," said the Bishop.

"We shall do more harm than good if we do. Besides which, Monsignor Vancelour will now be upon his guard; he's a priest, and whatever priests are they are not fools."

"I intend to invite Eva to the Palace," said he firmly.

"She'll proselytise your servants if you do. Perhaps she'll try to convert you," added Lady Caterham with a forced laugh. "No, no, Bishop; we are attaching too much importance to what is only a trifling matter." And she pressed her point, and at length persuaded her brother not to speak to Eva upon the subject, at all events for the present.

When he had taken his departure she re-read the missive that had raised her spirits. It was from Sir Ralph Vancelour, and consisted in a request that she would consent to see the writer when he called. She guessed at once that the Baronet intended to apply to her for her niece's hand; but it puzzled her that he should have fixed the Thursday in the following week for his visit. "I suppose that he wants all that time to pray for courage," she reflected. "No woman in the world could love the man, but fancy how the Church would benefit from an alliance between my fanatical niece and a millionaire! She could persuade him to devote his fortune to the Cause!"

CHAPTER X

SIR RALPH'S SUIT

SIR RALPH VANCELOUR had met Eva frequently of late, and, though nothing sentimental had passed between them, they had become good friends. Upon ascertaining from his uncle, Monsignor, that it was not the lady's intention to become a nun, the Baronet had determined to apply at once to Lady Caterham for her niece's hand; but he had been dissuaded from that course by Father Macdonald, to whom he confided all his secrets and whose advice he invariably followed. The priest had told him that it was the custom in England for a man to win the esteem of a lady before consulting with her guardians; the Baronet had mournfully returned that he had no idea how to set about that process; upon which Father Macdonald had undertaken to instruct him.

An alliance between the weak-minded millionaire and the strong-minded and intensely fervent Catholic lady was a consummation devoutly to be wished, but, as Father Macdonald realised, difficult to bring about. Sir Ralph was a good man and simple (simplicity was a great virtue in a layman), but he was not attractive, nay, to be frank, he was such a blunderer and such a boor that it was almost inconceivable that any woman of spirit could love him. Father Macdonald was not

overburdened with sentimentality, however, and he thought that love on the man's side and kindly regard on the woman's were sufficient affection for a marriage in all other respects so desirable. He therefore taught Sir Ralph how to comport himself in the presence of the lady, what to say, when to be silent, how to look; and the Baronet carried out his instructions. Poor Sir Ralph! How hard he worked! How hard he tried to be an ordinary gentleman! And poor Father Macdonald, who had to listen to minute descriptions of the lady's bearing, glances, remarks, and to decipher them for his very dull "son"! However, a result quite remarkable in the circumstances was attained: by strictly carrying out the astute injunctions of the priest Sir Ralph had won Eva's kindly regard, and that was the strongest feeling that he could expect to rouse in her before wedlock, in the opinion of Father Macdonald.

Recent events had increased Father Macdonald's anxiety that the pair should marry. From the first he had dreaded Eva's magnificent eyes and form. Such remarkable attractions were safe in the convent and more or less safe under the guardianship of a husband; their constant exhibition in the precincts of a church was fraught with danger. Not that Father Macdonald or Cardinal Grimsby (no doubt these two exchanged remarks upon the subject) feared that Monsignor would break his vows; what they dreaded was the "chatter of the world," and the world, Catholic and otherwise, was chattering and the paragraphs in the newspapers were calculated to add

volume to the chatter. Accordingly, Father Macdonald advised Sir Ralph to write at once to Lady Caterham, asking her to grant him an interview; and the Baronet did as he was told.

Sir Ralph's next meeting with his uncle took place eight days after the appearance of the momentous paragraphs, and much had happened in that interval. Several journals with large circulations had given hints and particulars regarding the well-known Catholic priest and the beautiful society lady whose affairs had led to the disgraceful personal encounter between the two retired guardsmen. The tone of most of them was that of assumed sympathy with the priest and the lady, whose romantic attachment, amid beautiful surroundings, must appeal to all readers except fanatical Romanists. Mortimer recognised in several of them the phraseology of Mrs. Wimpole. "The lady was quite too lovely!" he read, choking with disgust; and upon making inquiries of a friend he learned that Mrs. Wimpole was upon the staff of a well-known society paper, was quite a personage in the journalistic world, and considered an authority upon finance and horse-racing, as well as upon "the manners and doings of the upper ten." Nor was this all. Lady Newark had given a "Small and Early" during the week, which had been attended chiefly by her co-religionists, whom she had reminded, with an air of triumph, of the fears she had expressed to them months ago concerning her sister-in-law's attachment to the Rector of St. Peter's. The scandal was spreading like wildfire. Over a dozen Catholic

men asked Mortimer if "it could be true?" and the Misses ffennel and other gossipy women took him aside and whispered: "Isn't it dreadful? What will they do? I never believed in her! Poor Monsignor; he isn't so much to blame!" It would seem, however, that Eva herself did not hear of the rumours and reports till a few days later, a fact that may have been due to the awe she inspired in her companions. Accordingly, when she chanced to meet Monsignor after Benediction one day she was struck by the peculiar solemnity of his manner, and acutely hurt when he advised her in future to seek the spiritual counsel of Father Macdonald. He pleaded a rush of work, and stated that in a week or two he might have to quit the metropolis. His tone was strange, he seemed anxious to quit her, and the meeting did not last more than a few minutes.

There is no necessity to analyse the feelings of the Rector. The blow staggered him, and he was still reeling from the effects of it when his nephew acquainted him with his matrimonial aspirations: this may be held in excuse for the part he took in the interview.

Sir Ralph was a terrible bore. He began by asserting that it was the duty of a man in his position to marry; described at great length the injunctions which his dying mother—God rest her soul!—had given him in regard to his choice of a wife, went on to say that he had consulted Father Macdonald upon the subject, and finally, after an interminable amount of verbiage, gave his uncle the name of the favoured lady.

Monsignor's first feeling was astonishment, and he asked the young man whether the lady had betrayed any sign that she loved him. The Baronet replied that she had not, that it would have been very astonishing and altogether incorrect if she had. "How could she show love for me till she knew my intentions?" he asked. "She's a well-bred woman. She likes me. Father Macdonald—I mean *I* think so, and if I am accepted by her people as her suitor I fancy she will allow me to pay my addresses to her."

"I doubt it. Your ideas are Continental, Ralph"; and glancing at his nephew's ungainly figure, Monsignor shook his head in a hopeless fashion. "I am afraid that you have no chance," he went on. "I wish you had—sincerely. You have bestowed your affection on a worthy object, but——"

"I am in a position to make handsome settlements. I think I shall be able to satisfy Lady Caterham."

"But you have no reason to suppose that Lady Eva cares for you."

"Do you mean, Uncle, that there's another man?"

"No."

"She has rejected many of our people," said the Baronet, "and that rather looks— You don't think she likes Mortimer, do you?"

Monsignor shook his head.

"My position is as good as hers. . . . Ah! I have sometimes thought—but that's absurd. It is very unusual for English ladies to marry beneath them, isn't it?"

"Yes; but such *mésalliances* occasionally take place."

"Is Lady Eva the sort of girl——?"

"I don't think that she contemplates marriage at all."

"You can never be sure," said the young man sapiently. "I have sometimes thought——"

"Well, what have you thought?"

"That there's another man."

"Who?"

"Keramur."

"Keramur! Keramur!" repeated the priest, and an expression of relief came to his face, but quickly vanished.

"I know he loves her," pursued Sir Ralph, and then with some spite: "He has impudence enough for anything! Oh! I can tell you, he thinks himself my equal."

"In most respects he is your superior," said the priest quietly.

"But he's an or—organist!"

"True, and organists don't marry noble ladies."

"And—and he thinks that he helped to make her a Catholic, and—and all sorts of ridiculous things! And they see a lot of each other. And—Uncle, why don't you put a stop to it? He's compromising her."

"You are making a very foolish exhibition of yourself, Ralph. Your jealousy is childish. Go to Lady Caterham, and I hope that your suit will prosper. You want to know if I approve your choice? Yes, I do. Good-bye, my dear fellow."

They grasped hands, and Sir Ralph was moving towards the door when Monsignor called him back.

"You—are—a—very rich, indeed, a very wealthy man, Ralph," said the priest, twitching his features and speaking with hesitation. "With your wealth you could do much—very much—to help the Catholic cause in this country. That cause Lady Eva has at heart. She would die for it." There ensued a pause that lasted over a minute; after which: "Do you love her very much, Ralph?" asked Monsignor.

"I—I love her with all my soul!" cried the young man; "but I can't say it—I mean I can't say it properly. I know it now, I didn't know it before, that I'm a fool, that I've got nothing but my religion and my money. My dear mother—God rest her soul! —thought too much of me. I'm not worthy of Lady Eva; she is like my mother, a saint and beautiful, and everyone must love her. How could she love me? How could anyone love me except Blackie? And even he—something's wrong with him, somebody's been tampering with him. He barks when I say 'Pope.' But that's a trifle. Love her! God knows that I love her and that I would give her all that I have. If she won't have me, she shall have my money and do what she likes with it. I sha'n't want it then; I shall become a monk or a Jesuit—if the Society will have me."

Badly expressed as this was, it testified to an improvement in the spiritual condition of the man, an improvement due to the influence of a pure, unselfish love. His sainted mother had warned him against the passion, but his conscience told him that the affection he bore for Lady Eva was right and

good; and he went on to say so, in his strange fashion, to tell Monsignor that he had consulted his Maker and the Blessed Virgin upon the subject, that the Saviour and the Mother of the Saviour had spoken in his heart and sanctioned his love, but that no definite promise of success had been vouchsafed him. The lady might reject him, in which case he would retire altogether from the world, Father Macdonald having undertaken to provide a home for Blackie.

The fine countenance of the priest was ruffled, and his manner hesitating. "I see," he observed. "If the lady consented to marry you, you would allow her to dispose of your money as she thought fit."

"Why, certainly! She may build half a dozen cathedrals with it if she likes!"

"Then tell her so, Ralph! Tell her so! That is your best chance. Good-bye! Good-bye!"

But when his nephew had departed, Monsignor's conscience troubled him. The advice he had given the young man was not quite honourable.

Poor Lady Caterham! She worshipped success, and her life since her widowhood had been an utter failure. All her hopes were now fixed upon the union of her niece and the wealthy Baronet; if they were defeated she intended to let her town home in order to pay her debts, and to seek some remote place in the country. Meanwhile she guessed that the scandalous rumours had reached Eva, whose face wore a look of tragic sadness; but nothing was said

upon the subject by either lady, their intercourse having become strictly formal.

Sir Ralph did not appear to such advantage at his interview with Lady Caterham as at his meeting with Monsignor. Upon entering the Red Drawing-room in the house in Eaton Square, he found his hostess awaiting him, and after the introductory greetings he stood facing her with his head bent and his hat, cane, and gloves in his hand. She motioned him to a seat, but he paid no attention to the gesture; assumed a solemn, pompous air, and began with a detailed account of his sainted mother's wishes in regard to his future wife. She was to be of the faith, the scion of a royal stock, rich, convent bred, and the god-child of his Holiness. Now Lady Eva did not satisfy all these conditions, he observed, but in spite of that he wished to become her suitor.

"Yes," said Lady Caterham. "Won't you put down your hat and sit down?"

He ignored the question.

"I understand that you are a rich man, Sir Ralph," said she.

"My fortune has been exaggerated."

"Indeed!" said she, and her countenance fell.

"I have no land, and my lawyers tell me that I could not lay my hands on a larger sum than eight hundred thousand pounds."

"Do you mean that you could realise that amount at once?"

"Yes. But pardon me; I see that the subject is distasteful to you."

"But it isn't! It isn't! Have you consulted with Monsignor Vancelour or with Father Macdonald?"

"With both, and they support me."

"I have always had a secret liking for Romish priests," she thought.

"And now the question is, Do you favour my suit?" asked the Baronet.

"Yes; I should like to see you married to my niece. It is better to be frank in these matters. By-the-by, she has some money of her own, about forty thousand pounds. But it is only fair to you to say that I have very little influence over her."

"Still you allow me to pay my addresses to her?"

"Oh, yes!" Then she meditated for a while. "Please put down your hat and take a seat," said she. "Now, it is of course in your favour that you are a Catholic, Sir Ralph, for, as you know, my niece is an enthusiastic member of the Roman Church; and I suppose that I may take it for granted that you are—well, consumed with some such zeal as she is, or rather that if you married her you would be? It is a little difficult to express."

"I understand. I love Lady Eva sincerely."

"Yes, yes, of course you do, but——"

"She may build half a dozen cathedrals with my money if she likes."

Lady Caterham glanced up at him quickly, and there was genuine admiration in her eyes. "Then—why, then—then tell her so!" she cried.

He started. "Why, that's exactly what my uncle said!" escaped his lips.

Again she inwardly admitted a secret liking for the priests. But upon taking stock of the Baronet her face changed its expression. Would her high-spirited niece accept this awkward creature even upon the condition that she should be allowed to spend his fortune upon the Church? No, no. And yet, why not? Unquestionably she would die for the Church, and an early death was surely a worse fate than marriage with a man for whom, after all, she felt no repugnance. Now Lady Caterham herself *had* experienced such a feeling for the Manchester cotton-spinner and sound party man, James Brown (subsequently Lord Caterham), and yet she had married him of her own free will. As a girl *she* would have married such a man as Sir Ralph, and joined his church, and built, not half a dozen cathedrals, but a small chapel with cheap materials. It, however, occurred to her that her marriage with James Brown had been hurried through at her own request, that she had felt that though she could bear with that person as a husband she could not abide him as a lover; and she thought that a similar feeling would be experienced by Eva in regard to Sir Ralph Vancelour. The Baronet as a wooer was an appalling conception; no girl could pass through such an ordeal as his love-making!

"I have told you, Sir Ralph, that I should be glad to see you married to my niece," said she aloud. "She is, as you know, the daughter of a man of whom England is proud, her position is equal to that of any woman in the land under Royalty, and her personal

attractions are admitted by everyone to be very great. I see, however, much that is ap—appropriate in—in the arrangement we are discussing. You are a reasonable man, Sir Ralph; you are a prominent member of the Catholic body, you have the interests of the Church at heart, and you think they will be advanced by your marriage with my niece. My niece is also reasonable—I mean she acts according to design, according to a certain definite plan; she has the same interests at heart that you have; and what you must do is to impress upon her the fact that the Catholic cause would be served by her marrying you. Perhaps it would be better if I prepared her——"

"I would sooner that you did not, that you said nothing to her about the matter," said he with hauteur. "I wish to marry Lady Eva because I love her, not because our marriage would serve the interests of the Church. I ask your permission to be allowed to pay my addresses to her, that is all. It is not probable, but it is perhaps not altogether impossible that I might get her to—to—to like me a little."

His companion shook her head. "I don't wish to hurt your feelings, Sir Ralph," said she, "but if you attempt to win my niece's love before marriage you will fail in—in your main object. As a rule, it is not advisable to allude to such things, but I may as well tell you that several Catholic gentlemen have tried to win her affection, and have failed. The reason is quite simple: all her love is fixed upon the Church. I give you the same advice that your clergy gave you. They and I understand her."

Sir Ralph pondered this. He wanted the lady's love, but he reflected that perhaps Father Macdonald was right and that he might obtain it after marriage. Marriage was a sacrament ordained by God and worked wonders. "Well, at any rate, I would sooner tell her all that myself than that you should," he observed. "Yes, yes," he added with decision. "I would sooner that you said nothing about it, and I must ask you to respect my wishes."

She knitted her brows. Suddenly a thought came to her. "Couldn't you get one of the priests to speak for you?" she asked eagerly.

"No," said he curtly. "No; I shall speak for myself. I shall consult Father Macdonald again, and if he advises me to declare myself at once I shall do so; if he does not I must ask you to allow me to see you again. I—I don't think there is anything more to be said."

Her tone had jarred upon him, and he had taken a sudden dislike to her. The idea had gradually formed itself in his mind that he was being advised to bribe the girl into marrying him; and upon quitting Lady Caterham and repairing to Father Macdonald, he acquainted the priest with this idea and with the scruples it roused in him. The priest's attempt to reassure him was not altogether successful; and when he received a letter from Lady Caterham the next morning, in which she begged him to arrange a meeting between her and Monsignor Vancelour or Father Macdonald, the Baronet grew angry. He wrote her a short, curt note to say that he hoped to

call in Eaton Square that afternoon and lay his proposal before Lady Eva herself.

It would seem that Lady Caterham had disobeyed his injunction (after all, he had had no right to give it to her) and *had* spoken to Eva upon the subject of the forthcoming proposal, for upon entering the drawing-room in Eaton Square Sir Ralph observed that the girl wore an embarrassed air and glanced frequently at her aunt, as though requesting her not to leave her alone with the visitor. Hope died within the young man, and when the older lady quitted the room upon some pretext he did not hear, he felt himself unable to speak. Eva's face was eloquent: it implored him not to make the proposal; but it was very kind and gentle.

"Lady Caterham has told you——" he began, at length.

"Yes," she interrupted, "and I hope, Sir Ralph, that you will not be hurt, but it is quite impossible. I could not for a moment consider what—what you suggested to my aunt, but I don't want you to think me harsh. I sincerely trust that I have never said or done anything that you have misconstrued, that I have never given you the slightest ground for supposing——"

" Oh, no!" said he sadly. "You've only been kind to me, and you're kind to everybody. But I must speak, Lady Eva, I must say it. I have loved you for months and months, and though I have had no right to think that you would ever marry me, I couldn't help hoping, and I can't give up hoping

now. Let me go on hoping?" he implored. "Perhaps you might get to like me a little. You would not be bound, and I shouldn't bother you. You might let me see you now and then. *Do* let me go on!"

"It would be so much better that you didn't. We only pain each other."

"Ah! how can I expect you to care for me?" he exclaimed. "But mightn't we work together, devote ourselves to the same object? I should always do what you wanted."

"It is quite impossible, Sir Ralph," said she, not so gently as before, "and I must ask you to spare me. I am extremely sorry that—that this should have happened, but let us say nothing more about it, please."

"But really, really I might be of use to you," he pleaded, hating to say what he had been told to say and not knowing how to put it properly. "The Church would sanction our union. It would serve her interests. I have unlimited control over my money, and I should make it over to you. You would do anything for the Church, even—even perhaps, after a little thought, marry me, and then you would have the means to build churches, and help the poor, and—and—do no end of good. I don't like to have to say this——"

"You have no right to say it," she interrupted, colouring. "It is extremely ungenerous and unmanly of you to say it, and you have forfeited my respect. I don't suppose that you realise that you are offering me a price——"

"No, no!" he cried. "I don't mean it in that way; I haven't put it properly. Alliances have been made to serve the interests of the Church over and over again, just as they have been made to serve political interests. Should we not be willing to do for our Church what many people are willing to do for their country? You are not fair to me, Lady Eva; there is nothing dishonourable in my proposal. Ladies of my mother's house have not hesitated to marry in obedience to the advice of God's priests. I have sought counsel of my adviser and of my uncle, who saw nothing dishonourable in what I have proposed to you, who indeed told me to propose it."

"Do you mean to say that Monsignor Vancelour told you to come here and propose th-that to me?"

"Yes," said he.

"I don't believe it!" she cried. "I must now ask you to leave me." Saying which she rose and rang the bell.

The inevitable encounter between the aunt and niece took place in the evening of the same day. It was begun in a very irritating fashion by Lady Caterham. "I am quite sure that you have promised at least to consider Sir Ralph's proposal," said she.

"No, my aunt; I told him what I told you, that it was quite impossible, and when he began to press it I had to ask him to quit me. Please, please let us say nothing more about it!"

"I see. Then, after all, you're a faint-hearted Catholic. It would be an immense advantage to the Church if you married Sir Ralph. And you

don't dislike him; you have often said that you liked and respected him. He loves you and is ready to prove his love in the most practical fashion. Monsignor Vancelour favours his suit. The marriage would be a very appropriate one. Of course if you thought of becoming a nun it would be different—or if you liked another man. As it is I cannot understand your objection."

"What is the use of discussing the matter?" cried Eva wearily. "I have given him my answer. It is final and he knows it."

"But did he tell you about his intentions?"

"Intentions? Oh! you mean about the money? Yes, he was guilty of that impertinence."

"But it wasn't, it wasn't impertinent! Three out of four, nine out of ten, of the women of our class make reasonable marriages. They must do so. Think of your friends. They are not as a rule forced into marrying men they dislike, they do not sell themselves, but they marry the *right* men of their own choice. Sir Ralph is emphatically the right man in your case. I don't like to have to say it, but you seem to me to be blind. Go and discuss the matter with your spiritual director; he is a reasonable man."

"I intend to go to Monsignor and ask him how he could have been so ungenerous as to send his nephew to me with that insulting proposal—if he did send him, for I can hardly believe that he did. But let us change the subject. Indeed, indeed, my aunt, you must pardon me, but I will not discuss it!"

"Ah, Eva! we must discuss it, and discuss it in all

its bearings. You must do me the justice to say that I have rarely interfered in your affairs, and—and, Eva, that you have not always been kind to me and your other relations."

"I do admit that," said the girl, "and it has caused me much grief."

"And you must also admit that in going your own way you have often made great mistakes."

"Yes, yes, that is so. There seems to be a fatality about it."

"Your motives are good, but your acts are not judicious. And—ah, Eva, we must come to the point! My niece, my niece, you have terribly mismanaged your affairs. You have heard the rumours, you have seen the papers, you know what people are saying. Monsignor Vancelour's reputation is also at stake. A great scandal will fall, if it has not already fallen, upon your Church. Has that thought no weight with you? Do you realise that you will have done much more harm than good to the cause you have at heart? But you can arrest the scandal, and rehabilitate your name and the priest's, and do wonders for the cause, by accepting Sir Ralph Vancelour."

Lady Caterham had a very strong case; but she had better have left it here, or have repeated the arguments she had already used in another form. Unfortunately she went on to assert that, according to the latest rumour, her niece was attached not to the priest but to his nephew, to whom she was about to be betrothed. This was stated so incoherently

that Eva did not at first catch its drift, and said so, whereupon Lady Caterham, with a blush, handed her a copy of a certain journal, which circulated exclusively among the vulgar—at least so it was said. "It is a common print, I admit," she faltered, "but—but—but, as a matter of fact, everyone reads it. Look at this paragraph!"

The paragraph was written by one "Maud," who stated that she had heard on the best authority that a marriage had been arranged between Sir Ralph Vancelour, the wealthy Catholic baronet, and Eva Fitzgower, only daughter of the first Marquis of Newark.

The girl's suspicions were instantly aroused. Looking searchingly at her aunt, she said, "You caused that to be written."

"I didn't!" cried the older lady. "I haven't the least notion who 'Maud' is."

"That may be; but you sent the *news* through Lady Tremlow, who deals in this sort of thing and makes money by it."

"I didn't!" repeated the other. "I didn't! I—" Here she broke down and shed tears. "You—you must be saved from your—your madness!" she cried. "I—I was desperate. And it's true or going to be true. You—you must marry him! You shall not be allowed to bring this disgrace upon the family and—and your Church. You—you are an innocent woman, but you are mad—mad! Ah, the anxiety and trouble you have caused us all since you were a child! Think of your family, if you won't think of

your Church or your good name or the priest's. The Bishop is beside himself with grief, wifeless and sonless. Percy has publicly disgraced himself and run away; Alec has run away. Tanworth's widow has fallen into the hands of an unscrupulous adventuress who will end by ruining her. Little Newark is —where is he? They say at a tutor's or with the wife of a tutor—for he is still an infant; but who can tell if it's true?"

There was much more to this effect, after which she again implored her niece to reconsider Sir Ralph's proposal, repeating her arguments as to the desirability, the absolute necessity, of the match. She was a desperate woman, as she said, her tongue ran away with her, she lost her prudence, and made another unwise admission. After stating that Sir Ralph would press his suit again, she declared that she had written to him to advise him not to lose hope if her niece rejected him upon the first asking. This again roused Eva's indignation; she reiterated her refusal to give another thought to the proposal, whereupon Lady Caterham uttered these unforgivable words: "Then I believe that you do love the priest! Marry him! The law allows it!"

At these words Eva quitted the room, and her aunt realised that henceforth they would be strangers.

CHAPTER XI

THE OLD EVE

Eva was to look back upon the interesting period of her history as the record of a struggle between her natural self and the influence exerted over her by a great spiritual power. Naturally, so to speak, she was a splendid pagan, proud, masterful, ambitious; she had rank, beauty, health, and money: the qualities and possessions that were calculated to win her a great position in this pagan world. But a terrible misfortune had been sent her at the outset of her career and had thrust upon her a sense of the wickedness and folly of the world; religion as represented by the Catholic Church had attracted her, forced itself upon her attention; and with the help of the grace imparted to her through the sacraments she had tried to kill or to subdue the old Eve within her. But the old Eve was strong and cunning; like the old Adam in the ecclesiastic it could assume a religious aspect. In the original instance it had led her to undertake her mission, and for a while had influenced her in her campaign; in other words, her masterful spirit, her love of imposing her will upon others and compelling them to follow in her footsteps, had entered into her motives in making converts to the Church of Rome. The world looked almost with approval upon the beautiful propagandist, and she

enjoyed her mission and was flattered at its success; but when the world began to look upon her with distrust and hatred, her mission could not be continued but at the cost of self-sacrifice, and only for a short while longer. It was abundantly evident that in the near future the field would be closed against her, that she would practically be ostracised from her *monde*, and there was no reason to suppose that she could successfully carry on her propaganda among the bourgeoisie. But at her last long interview with Monsignor Vancelour she had (in obedience to his advice, which it had cost him a great effort to give her) come to a momentous resolution: she had chosen her path, the path that leads to heaven through pain and humiliation, the way of the cross. Thenceforth she was to undertake the most ungrateful tasks for Christ's sake; what they would be she knew not except that they would serve the cause of religion, would be difficult to execute, and would presumably win her neither admiration, nor celebrity, nor even respect. In other words, she was to lead a life of severe self-denial. Again, Monsignor had warned her against the subtle temptation that assails the pious, the temptation to indulge and take refuge in spiritual pride, that awful sin by which the angels fell, and which, if she yielded to it, would render her abhorrent in God's sight; and she had understood his warning.

But since then the storm had burst. The scandal, which had been spreading for months in secret, was suddenly noised abroad and reached her ears. At first it staggered her, as it had staggered Monsignor.

On reflection she perceived that, though it sprang from a lie or a misconception, so many circumstances suggested that it was true that most people would believe it; and before many days had passed she knew that most people did believe it. To contradict it publicly would do more harm than good. The situation was in truth almost as desperate as Lady Caterham had described it. She could escape from it, indeed, by marrying Sir Ralph, but she would not take that course. By-the-by, had Monsignor sent his nephew to her with that unmanly proposal in the hope that she would accept it and thus arrest the scandal? She had said that she did not believe that he had, but she did believe it.

She continued with her meditations. She could not for a long time to come mix with her co-religionists, many of whom had regarded her with suspicion and most of whom would now condemn her. Neither could she mix in general society. Society would probably not condemn her, but, on the contrary, be in a mood to forgive her for her proselytism and all the unhappiness it had caused. Society would rejoice in the thought that she loved the priest and the priest loved her, that it had discovered their secret, their romance; and it would look forward to their marriage and regard it as a triumph of humanity over an unnatural ecclesiastical system. Nay, if the marriage did not come off and the priest were to vanish, society would pity and take interest in her; but such pity and interest would be abhorrent to her; the mere thought of it sent a flush to her cheek.

She would have to go away, and she would have to bear the burden of her coreligionists' contempt and the curiosity and pity of the world. But had she the strength to bear it? Well, she would have to find the strength. She was tempted and she fell. The old Eve reasserted itself. Two courses were open to her, and she chose the wrong one. She might have summoned her Christian strength, fortitude, and have suffered injustice for Christ's sake, have resigned herself to His will. She might have accepted the wrong done her as a "cross," have taken it up, and proceeded with it up the narrow path. She did make an attempt to do so, but the "cross" was heavy, and she dropped it. Then she summoned her pagan strength, pride, and suddenly the burden seemed light.

What did it matter what the world, Catholic or Protestant, lay or clerical, thought of her? The world outside the Church was unworthy of her scorn, which she would reserve for and pour out upon the world within it. She arraigned the whole Catholic body, or rather all the members of it that she had known. She would do them justice, they were for the most part respectable people, and such of them as were in Holy Orders kept their vows, so far as she knew, administered the sacraments, and preached sound doctrine. But how lamentable were their shortcomings! They exhorted the laity to win people to the faith and to encounter the opposition of the world, but they did not mean their words to be taken literally; they dreaded, they feared the woman who

took them literally, regarded her as an *enfant terrible*, gave her but a half-hearted support, and when suspicion fell upon her abandoned her altogether. "With the thought that I am injudicious they will dismiss me from their minds!" she inwardly exclaimed. Now they were loud in their praise of Lady Purley's work, which indeed was a good work, but which approved itself to the world as well as to the Church, and which therefore they showed wisdom and policy in praising. For, after all, they as well as others, though not quite to the same extent, strove to win the good opinion of the world, and they did win it, and for the most part they deserved it. English Roman Catholic priests were regarded by the majority of their compatriots as mistaken but as good men, and it was the same with the Roman Catholic laity. There was still an immense amount of bigotry in the land, but in these days it rarely took the form of ill-will against individuals. Catholics were not persecuted. *She* was, and she was hated, but then *she*, unlike her co-religionists, lay and clerical, did not strive after the world's good opinion. She had suffered the world's persecution, and she had the right to speak her mind about the lamentable worldliness of Catholics, and she would speak it to a representative priest, to Monsignor, that evening if possible. She would endeavour to be calm, but as a prophet she would hold forth upon the degeneracy, the utter lack of zeal of the Catholics in this land. She would ask him how he could expect the English people to return to their allegiance to Rome while

they had in their midst such wretched examples of Rome's children? The English were a proud and a great race, and they hated the Church, which was prouder and greater than they (she had done so herself); but they might yet, aye and they would, submit if Catholics proved themselves worthy of the name. She should know, she had brought many proud Englishmen and Englishwomen into the Church. She would say all this to Monsignor, and then she would shake the dust from her feet, quit the country and enter a convent, in the hope of finding there what she had failed to find elsewhere, Catholics worthy of her friendship!

CHAPTER XII

LADY EVA'S ENCOUNTER WITH CARDINAL GRIMSBY

SHE made her plans. She would call for the last time upon the Keramurs and bid them good-bye, pay a last visit to St. Peter's, see Monsignor and bring her indictment before him, and make arrangements for quitting town at a moment's notice.

Upon her entering the breakfast-room Lady Braintree handed her a note from her aunt, who begged her niece's pardon for the words she had uttered last night, complained of headache, and asked the girl to visit her in her bedroom some time in the morning. Eva paid no heed to the note, had her breakfast, and ordered the carriage. She would prove to herself that she was an object of suspicion, curiosity, contempt, and thus justify her attitude towards, her condemnation of, her fellows, and reinforce her desire to quit "the world."

The weather was beautiful. Rain had fallen in the night, cool winds tempered the heat, many of the early flowers were still in bloom, the trees wore their heaviest foliage; it was a time of ripeness, zenith; the promise of spring was fulfilled and much of its freshness preserved. The annual rush from the metropolis had not yet set in. The Row and Drive still presented animated scenes, and the pleasure-seekers had not that worn and haggard look which in

most years creeps over them as the season nears its end.

Eva's carriage entered the Drive; she gazed for the last time upon the fashionable crowd, her *monde;* and in every unamiable countenance, averted head, stiff attitude read the evidence she sought. If a person smiled at her it was, she told herself, in derision; or merely nodded, a recognition given reluctantly; or saluted her with grace and kindness, the sign of a charitable disposition. The short-sighted gave her the cut direct, the long-sighted looked past her, pretending not to see her. And all the whisperings were about herself; and the exchanges of glances, the movements of shoulders, the play of features had reference to her—or at least so she thought, no doubt mistakenly. Meanwhile her own look was proud and scornful, and she returned the salutes given her with a haughty condescending nod. She had soon gathered the proof she needed, and ordered her coachman to drive to the Keramurs'. When he had done so she dismissed him.

She was told that the mother and son were within, and upon crossing the threshold of Madame de Keramur's boudoir she was instantly aware of its atmosphere of peace. The old lady was reading, Ernest writing music. He rose on seeing her, came forward, and when she had given him her hand, bent and saluted it with his lips. He had done so once before—when she had announced to him her reception into the Church of Rome—and she had not resented the action then, though the thought had

struck her that she would have resented it if he had been an Englishman. Upon the present occasion she felt that it was appropriate, that the young man intended it as a mark of his increased respect for one who was suffering for Christ's sake. And his glance and manner, his mother's reception of her, his action in motioning her with a graceful gesture to the great oak chair reserved for herself, for Monsignor, and for Cardinal Grimsby, soothed and gratified her. Here at all events she was appreciated; here she received the homage due to her; here she was recognised as a great Catholic. She knew, moreover, that though she had hitherto appeared before the Bretons in triumph and was now defeated, that would not shake their belief in her.

Ernest was aware of enough of her recent history to form a shrewd guess as to her present position, but of course he did not refer to it. He allowed her to speak first. Looking at him with a sad smile, she began: "You will remember, M. de Keramur, that I have always told you that you were too sanguine. Ah, my friend! I know more about my compatriots than you do. I never thought that England would be converted in our time. I only thought that we could do a little, just a little to help the Cause, win over a few souls, and encourage other Catholics to follow our example. I say 'we,' for you have helped me, and I am very grateful to you for your help, and still more grateful to you for having helped to bring about my own conversion. We were thrown together for a special purpose. Now I have come to say that

I have had to abandon my mission, and that we shall not meet again. I am going abroad, to Rome, and shall enter a convent there."

Ernest started visibly. "Oh, no, no!" he cried. "Oh, no! you must not enter a convent!" and his face assumed an expression that she had never seen in it before. "Oh, no!" he cried out again. "You were not meant to be a nun. It is not God's will. You will abandon that idea."

His tone surprised her. "I intend to become a nun," she returned. "I shall not abandon the idea. I intend to become a nun because I despise the world and can't breathe its atmosphere. Its aims and ideas are contemptible. The Catholic laity and the clergy also have deeply disappointed me. They try to make the best of two worlds; they are not prepared to sacrifice themselves, nor to encounter persecution. They are very respectable citizens for the most part, and do their duties when they are not arduous, but the grand old spirit of the Ages of Faith no longer animates them. They are children of the age, an age that thinks only of worldly prosperity and personal comfort. I have mixed with them now for a long time, I know them well, and I do not intend to pass the remainder of my life among them. You—no, not you—they may retort that they eyed me askance from the first, and that they would be only too glad to see no more of me. I am—I have heard the whisper—an *enfant terrible!* But what they think is of no consequence. My anxiety is on behalf of my converts, who *are* saintly spirits and who may be

scandalised when they discover that Catholics are much the same as other people. They may be severely tempted, and I shall not be at hand to strengthen them; but I shall pray for them. I look forward to my life in the convent among loyal, logical, genuine Catholic ladies. They will not misunderstand me. No, no, don't protest, my dear friend! My mind is made up. I have come to bid you good-bye. But I want you to play to me once again. I shall be at my old place—you know it—before the chapel of St. Peter's at half-past seven this evening."

Thereupon she rose and kissed Madame de Keramur upon the cheek. "I wish you to keep this in memory of me," said she, taking a handsome diamond cross from her bodice and handing it to the old lady. Then she gave her hand to Ernest, who took it and pressed it slightly.

"Oh, let me speak now!" he cried, looking fondly at her, whereupon she started back and regarded him with consternation.

"But no," he muttered, dropping his eyes. "No; the time has not yet come."

She quitted the room, he following her, descended the stair, and stepped into the street; she then turned and glanced at him with a look of profound disappointment.

Then he had acted from design, played a part, crept into her esteem by false pretences! He whom she had called her spiritual brother was a mere temporal lover in disguise! The interest in her

conversion and in her mission that he had shown was assumed that he might win her hand in marriage! He had regarded her, not as a saint of God's Church, but as his prospective wife! She dismissed him scornfully from her mind, put him with the other Catholics against whom she was to launch her indictment before Monsignor that evening.

Upon returning to Eaton Square she was told by Lady Braintree that her aunt had quitted the house, was journeying to Winton, and hoped to be back again in town late in the evening, at about eleven o'clock, with the Bishop. Dreading a scene and a meeting with her uncle, Eva determined to quit London that evening before he and her aunt should have returned. She wrote a letter, addressed to them both, in which she announced to them her intention of going abroad and entering a convent; expressed the hope that they would not attempt to find out her address, nor write to her, nor be anxious on her behalf. No possible good could come of their meeting again, she added; she was about to sever her connection with the outside world, and leave-takings would only cause pain to her relations and herself. She sealed the letter, and left it with her aunt's maid.

She asked Lady Braintree to forgive her for not appearing at luncheon, and summoned her maid. This was at about half-past one o'clock; five hours later she had called upon her bankers and her lawyers, written many letters, consulted time-tables, superintended the packing of her trunks, and made

all her arrangements and preparations for quitting the country and "the world." The task would have occupied most women for days; she accomplished it in a few hours: a remarkable feat. She told her maid to be at the Victoria station at half-past nine o'clock with the luggage (they were to spend the night at Dover), and then quitted the house, stepped into a hansom, and was driven in the direction of St. Peter's Church.

It suddenly occurred to her that she had not made an appointment with Monsignor, that she might not see him that night, that he might not be in town. She was annoyed at her oversight, but it was too late to alter her plans. If she postponed her departure she would have to encounter her uncle and aunt and endure their remonstrances and reproaches, and after her experience in the morning she was extremely anxious to avoid meeting her friends. She would quit London that night, and if she did not see Monsignor she would write to him her indictment of the Catholic body. This had crossed her mind when she became aware that the cab had entered the square in which Newark House stood. An overpowering desire to look upon her old home took possession of her; she asked the cabman to stop, stepped out of the vehicle, paid her fare, and stood for a minute gazing through the gateway at the façade of the mansion. She cared not if she were observed, recollections crowded in upon her, and when she drew herself from the spot it was only to return to it a few minutes later when she had made the circuit of the square.

She thought of her father, that distinguished Englishman, and of her love for him, his love for her, his pride in her, and her own pride. Her pride had not then been what it was now, the best kind of pride, but it had not been ignoble. She was unregenerate in those days, practically not a Christian at all, merely a woman of the world, but eminent in it, and she had had a right to the homage paid her. Subsequently she had ruled at Newark House and Tanworth; but she would not if she could re-establish her authority in those mansions; nor did she regret the remoter past. Her position at present, if rightly understood, was far more splendid than it had ever been. She was about to quit "the world," which was unable to appreciate a genuine Catholic lady!

She proceeded on her way, still experiencing feelings of exaltation, and at length reached Church Lane. The sun was sinking; the clouds at the zenith of the heavens were rose-hued; but it was getting dark below, and the church looked sombre. Upon drawing near to it, indeed, and gazing up at the front she was struck by its forbidding aspect. It seemed to frown upon her, to warn her not to enter: an impression she was to remember. She hesitated till a pedal note reached her, and then she seemed to understand why the church wore an unfriendly look. The organ was being played by M. de Keramur, one of the pillars of St. Peter's, so to speak, while the whole church might be regarded as the expression of the personality of Monsignor Vancelour, the attractive Catholic priest. She recalled the words he had

addressed to her upon a memorable occasion: "We must not come to God's house to seek pleasurable sensations, Lady Eva." But St. Peter's Church was calculated to awaken such sensations, the music and the gorgeous ceremonies awoke them, the congregation could not but feel them. "Aristocratic Rome," the Cardinal had said; the prospective Carmelite might change the phrase to "Sensuous Rome," nay, "Décadent Rome!" She was about to put from her such sensuous feelings as St. Peter's was apt to engender, and worship in a cold, bare chapel, where the music was a monotonous recitative upon two notes. St. Peter's frowned upon her, and no wonder, for she was about to condemn much that it represented.

But upon entering the church and taking a seat in the nave her mood changed. The happiest hours of her life had been spent in St. Peter's; the influences and associations of the place affected her; and when Monsignor entered from the sacristy and set forth upon his devotional journey from Station to Station (he went the "Way of the Cross" every day at the same hour), she had to whisper, "I shall speak my mind! I shall bring my indictment before him," lest her resolution should quit her.

The organ music was of a very exciting character, not at all archaic, extremely modern, dramatic, most sensational. A critical ear would have recognised much of it as the work of Wagner. Ernest was probably playing, not from a score, but from memory, and he threw his soul, apparently an agonised

soul, into his interpretation of the music. Bach, Handel, Mendelssohn, grand and stately masters, express profound emotion indeed, but in a restrained manner; the yearning, agonised, and, for the time being, despairing soul seeks the great music-dramas of Wagner; and it was a selection from one of these that Ernest was pouring out into the darkening church.

The music wrought upon Eva, though her consciousness was not fixed upon it; she kept repeating to herself, "I shall speak my mind this evening! I shall speak my mind this evening!" She had had no luncheon, no tea, nothing to eat or drink since breakfast; she had run to and fro and transacted business, passed through much agitation, worn herself out. Her mind began to wander, her thoughts to float, as it were, upon the streams of sound issuing from the organ.

The light gradually left the stained-glass windows, and the church grew darker and darker; shadowy forms seemed to be moving about in the sanctuary. She was startled by the ringing of the sacristy bell. A little later a man entered the building with a taper, and lit two or three of the gas brackets in one of the aisles. She could see his face, and to her surprise (for she knew all the officials of St. Peter's) it was strange to her; she next observed that changes had been effected in the church, that the altars that were visible had fewer flowers and candles upon them than usual. The light was still very dim, but it enabled her to perceive that there were others in the church

besides Monsignor, the organist, and herself. She could just make out a tall figure in the Lady Chapel, conversing, she thought but could not be sure, with a shorter figure. They moved occasionally, and presently she observed the taller of them walk towards the sacristy and quit the church. The shorter then turned and looked in her direction and then in the direction of Monsignor. She could not see his face, though she was absorbed in watching him; and when, a few minutes afterwards, he followed in the footsteps of his late companion, passing quickly through a sphere of dim light, she started. It was a ghost in a cassock that had vanished into the sacristy! She told herself that the impression was false and absurd, but she could not throw it off. She had caught a momentary glimpse of a face that was no longer human, and the way in which the cassock had hung about the limbs of the fleeing figure showed that it clothed a frame that had lost its flesh!

Superstitious fears took possession of her. She felt that she must rise to her feet and move about, and she was in the act of doing so when her attention was drawn to Monsignor, who had halted between two Stations and was gazing with intentness at a wooden structure which she knew was his confessional. This awoke her curiosity, and when he had moved on again she quitted her bench and, to the strains of the weird and terrible music, crept towards the spot where he had lingered. She thereupon discovered that his name over the confessional had been removed and Father Macdonald's substituted for it, and she was wonder-

ing what this change betokened, when she observed that Monsignor had finished his devotions and was walking towards the sacristy. But before he reached it he stopped suddenly, and Eva's heart leapt within her. The music, which had been increasing in intensity and volume and had suggested the approach towards some climax, some awful consummation, abruptly ceased upon a terrific discord. The effect was startling. It was as though a host of laughing devils had invaded the church. Eva thought that the clattering reverberations would drive her mad, when, making a great call upon her will, she flew up the aisle at her topmost speed, burst into the sacristy, and found herself with Monsignor.

The sacristy was darker than the church. It was a large place, fitted up like a chapel; such light as there was came from a gas bracket, which was turned down low, and which had a reflector behind it that cast the light upon her companion's face. Monsignor's countenance was indeed the only brightly illumined object in the sacristy, much of which was in almost complete darkness.

The priest looked surprised, but he spoke first. "Well, my daughter?" he inquired calmly.

Eva was out of breath and violently excited. She could not choose her tones and phrases; she had to speak wildly or not at all. "I wished to see you before going away," she gasped. "I go—go abroad to-night. I—I shall enter a convent. You sent your nephew to me. It was very wrong of you. You told him to offer me a bribe!"

"No," said the priest, "you must not think that. My nephew loves you, and he told me so, and I expressed the hope that you would accept him. Then, indeed——"

"Yes," she interrupted him; "and then you advised him to make use of my enthusiasm and love of the Church and tempt me into marrying him. You told him to point out to me that I could build churches and further the Cause if I had his fortune at my disposal."

"Yes, I told him that, but after all——"

"Ah! but was that honourable and just to me?"

Monsignor thought a moment. "No, not quite," said he. "I should have recalled the advice if I had been able. I was perplexed, in a difficulty. I do not think that I should have given my nephew that advice had I devoted a minute or two to reflection. It seemed to me that a marriage between you and him was a desirable event; I thought too much of his and my wishes in the matter and too little of what your wishes might be. I saw my nephew to-day and told him that I regretted having given him that advice. I say the same to you. I regret it. I think that you have cause for complaint against me."

Eva had expected that he would admit his wrong-doing, and she paid little heed to his words. "I must speak! I must speak!" she was inwardly exclaiming; and at length she said aloud: "I have something else to say to you. I am going abroad, I am going to enter a convent; I shall become a passive daughter of the Church. I have been an active member, but I

have not been properly supported. English Catholics are quiet and respectable, but they have no zeal. It is only the converts who have zeal and who push the interests of their religion at cost to themselves. When I joined the Church and worked for her with all my might, I knew that I should forfeit my popularity among Protestants, but I expected to have the good-will of my co-religionists. But I have not got it. They don't like me or my work; they dread me and avoid me, and are ready and eager to believe any slander against me. I am a fanatic, a preaching woman, a disturbing and unpleasant person! God forbid that their Anglican friends should think that they resembled me, that I was a representative Catholic! Why, Catholics are like other people, quite as nice and agreeable! They are almost as much respected in society as Protestants themselves! I bring discredit upon them. They are ashamed of me. The clergy don't support me. Why should they? I am an *enfant terrible!* They want to lead quiet lives and be on good terms with their neighbours. And when I am slandered, Catholics, priests and laity, disown me and abandon me to my enemies!"

"No, no," said Monsignor hurriedly; then, "Sh! Sh!" as she was going to begin again; and he jerked his head and peered into the darkness.

Eva did not hear the light footsteps that were approaching them; though almost exhausted, she went on: "When I joined the Church I thought, I hoped, I forced myself to believe that it was composed of noble souls; but it is not—not outside the

monastery and convent, at all events. I shall therefore enter a convent, in the hopes of finding noble Catholics there. If my hopes are not gratified I shall indeed be alone!"

She had scarcely finished speaking when, to her amazement and terror, the apparition she had beheld in the church suddenly entered her sphere of vision with uplifted hand. "Go down upon your knees!" she heard, and, believing for the moment that she was in the presence of the Supernatural, she instantly obeyed. Monsignor stood his ground for a second, as though he wished to remain with her and protect her, but he reluctantly withdrew in obedience to a commanding gesture from his Superior. And then the Cardinal addressed her as follows:

"You are guilty of deadly sin! Your sin is pride. You deserve Hell! *Pride is hateful before God and men. It is the beginning of all sin; he that holdeth it shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end.* Holofernes, Herod, the Pharisee: you will have these for your companions! Your brethren are everywhere engaged in warfare against God and His Church. There is the covetous man, hard of heart, a liar, a perjurer, a thief, who setteth his own soul to sale. He—*He* is thy brother! There is the shameless woman, immodest, impure, who seduces the innocent, who incites men to jealousy, revenge, suicide, and murder, and ends her life in madness or despair. She—*She* is thy sister! There is the man of anger, who hates, curses, kills his fellow-man. He—*He* is thy brother! And the glutton and wine-

bibber, whose God is his belly, and the envious man who repines at his neighbour's good, and the sluggard. *These* are thy brothers!"*

The awful words were spoken slowly, softly, and in a tone of restrained indignation. While uttering them the old man held up his forefinger and fixed his piercing eyes upon the face of the kneeling woman. Sheer terror possessed her. Some moments passed before she realised that she was in the presence of the Cardinal. He looked like a man who had emerged from the tomb; he seemed to be delivering a message that he had heard in another sphere; and in his eyes there shone the extraordinary intelligence that one would expect in a man who had been vouchsafed a glimpse into the world beyond the grave.

She rose in obedience to his gesture; she was ready to do his bidding, no matter what it was.

"You must pray for God's mercy," said he.

"I—I—may I confess my sin? Will—will you hear my confession?" she appealed to him.

"Yes," said he; and he moved to the sacristy door, and held it open for her. "I shall come to you presently, my child, when you are contrite."

She muttered that she was that already, and implored him to hear her confession at once. He signified that he would do so, followed her into the church, and unlatching the screen of the Lady Chapel, entered the chancel and took a seat. She knelt upon one of

*Pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth, are known in the Roman Catholic Church as the Seven Deadly Sins.

the steps at his feet, with the screen between them, and confessed her sin. When he had given her his absolution she asked if she might see him after she had said her penance and made her thanksgiving, and he told her Yes, that he would be in the rector's reception-room in the presbytery, and would send the sacristan to conduct her thither. He then quitted her.

About twenty minutes later she entered the little room that she knew so well, and found the Cardinal there. He rose upon seeing her, and in a courteous gesture invited her to a seat. She obeyed, and then observed that the table was laid with tea things, a plate of sandwiches, and some biscuits.

"I thought that you might be fatigued, my child," said he, "and I ordered these things for you. Kindly allow me to pour out the tea."

She thanked him, and he waited upon her with the same grace that he had shown towards Ernest de Keramur in a scene that has been described. She ate and drank, for she was sorely in need of food, and meanwhile experienced a feeling of deep gratitude towards the man who had recently included her among the slaves of the Seven Deadly Sins. She was touched by his charm and courtesy, the tender solicitude on her behalf that she read in his eyes—eyes that had terrified her half-an-hour ago! He alluded to her father, whom he described as a great Englishman, and whom it appeared that he had known. "God took him when his eyes were opening to the truth," said he; "had he lived a little longer he would have submitted to Holy

Church. But do not bemoan him, my child. Pray for him, indeed; but pray also for those who linger in this vale of tears. Pray for the poor man who addresses you, who is so so old, so weary, longing for release!" Saying which he sank into a chair with a sigh of exhaustion.

Eva felt a lump in her throat, and the next moment her eyes filled with tears.

About a quarter of an hour later they quitted the room together, and met Father Macdonald in the passage. He hesitated upon seeing them, and the Cardinal said, "Yes?"

"I—may I speak with your Eminence a little later?"

"Why not speak now? You are acquainted with Lady Eva Fitzgower?"

Father Macdonald bowed stiffly, and then addressing the Cardinal, said: "I have had to dismiss M. de Keramur. I told him to stop playing this evening and he refused."

"Did you let him know that you were the rector?"

"Yes, and I reiterated my order, but he went on playing. At length he said, 'I have been asked to play this evening by one who has the right to command my services.' Again I ordered him to stop, and then I told him that he had forfeited his post."

"Oh no!" cried Eva, who realised that she was responsible for the young man's dismissal. "Oh no, Father! You will reconsider the matter, I feel sure. I—I am to blame. I asked M. de Keramur to play this evening."

Father Macdonald bowed but said nothing, and

after a rapid glance at him she turned to the Cardinal and pleaded with him on behalf of the young Breton. His Eminence thought for a while; then addressing the priest, "I shall see you later," said he; and when Father Macdonald had walked away: "There are reasons, my daughter, that render it unadvisable that I should interfere with the plans of the new rector of St. Peter's. I shall not ask him to reinstate M. de Keramur. But our young friend's loss is not so great as you imagine. St. Peter's enters upon a new phase of its existence to-morrow. The expenses of the church will be cut down, the choir dismissed, the organ sold. Monsignor Vancelour has been summoned to Rome and will probably remain at the Vatican. The aristocratic congregation will quit St. Peter's and go elsewhere. In these circumstances it would not have been worth M. de Keramur's while to remain organist of the church. He and I are friends, but he has false theories upon the subject of church music. If he will abandon them and consent to carry out my wishes, I shall enrich him; if he will not, he must suffer for resisting the known truth."

This reassured Eva in regard to M. de Keramur, and her thoughts returned in gratitude to the Cardinal, who had thrust upon her an overwhelming sense of her sinful pride and reduced her to the level of the humblest apple-woman.

There was a brougham outside the presbytery.

"I thought you might be tired," said the Cardinal, following her into the street, "and I ordered this carriage for you."

He opened the door for her, and she stepped into the vehicle. In obedience to a request he read in her eyes, he then put his thin aged hand over the door of the brougham, and she saluted his ring and dropped tears upon his fingers. The sight was interesting and impressive. It signified the triumph of a great ecclesiastic over a proud and passionate woman.

CHAPTER XIII

"SPIRITED AWAY"

THAT Lady Eva Fitzgower and Monsignor Vancelour had suddenly quitted London was soon known to everybody interested in them, and a little later the movements of the pair were traced to Rome. They had travelled by the same train to Dover and crossed the Channel by the same boat, but there was no evidence that they had met; and though Dame Gossip was inclined to the belief that they had gone off together she was puzzled on hearing of their destination. Rome was the last place to which a Catholic priest would take the object of his passion, unless indeed he wished to flout the Church of which he had been a member: an intention difficult to attribute to so well bred a man as Monsignor. Again, the chief Catholic journal announced that he had been summoned to Rome by the Pope himself, who wished to have him at the Vatican on account of his knowledge of things English. "Tell that to the marines!" said Mr. Balsam in the *Anti-Papist*.

Such members of the Catholic body as had given ear to the scandal and repeated it now regretted their action. The truth would soon be known, and if it was proved that Monsignor had broken his vows it behoved Catholics to be silent about the matter. Some of

Father Macdonald's "saints," however, had a merry time of it. The lady "who went to confession every other day and remained in the box for an hour accusing herself of her virtues" had always regarded Monsignor as far too easy-going a priest, and the lady "who had visited Rome in the old days and wouldn't say what went on there lest her Protestant friends should think—" was not in the least surprised: "Monsignori, Cardinals, my dear, they are all men!" As for Lady Newark, she went about declaring that, though herself a Catholic and a sister-in-law of Lady Eva's, she was compelled by her love of truth to admit that she had proof that a guilty affection existed between the girl and the priest, which "a feeling for the family and the Church" prevented her from divulging. Mrs. Wimpole was astounded at the "lack of heart" displayed towards the pair and wanted to know if romance was dead in the land. Lady Caterham said little but wrote much—to her niece, and received in return one note which contained no news, while the Bishop, who also wrote to Eva, promising to forgive her if she returned at once to her relations, received no answer at all.

But it would be easy to exaggerate the commotion raised by the girl and the priest's disappearance. Society, especially the Catholic section of it, was stirred, but the great public knew nothing about the matter and would have remained ignorant about it but for the action of the Bishop of Winton. Addressing a public meeting in his diocese in the month of November, he spoke of the dangers threatening the Church from the

encroachments of Rome, and went on to dwell upon the low state of morality engendered by the Romish system. He assured his hearers that that system aimed at enslaving, not only the consciences and minds of its adherents, but in some cases their very bodies. He declared that the priest whose loyalty to Rome was suspected was in danger of being spirited away, after which he might never again be heard of. Nay more, laymen and laywomen stood in the same peril. To be sure it did not often happen that a free-born Englishman or Englishwoman was thus spirited away, but it did occasionally happen; and though he or she might reappear, who was to tell what had happened to him or her meanwhile?

It will be observed that the Bishop did not commit himself to much. If he had been referring to his niece he had admitted that she might reappear, while the words "Who was to tell what had happened to him or her meanwhile?" could not be quoted with much effect against him in the event of her turning up again safe and sound. But he had used a telling phrase, "Spirited away," and it was caught up and up and rang throughout the land. So the Romish Church was in the habit of spiriting people away! The British public was stirred by the phrase into one of its periodical fits of rage against Rome. "No Popery! No Popery!" was to be heard, not only in the street and in such infectious quarters as Mr. Balsam's shop, but in the drawing-rooms of the great. At a dinner party at which Mortimer was present a well-known statesman expressed his belief that many people were

annually spirited away by the Roman power. Mortimer was warned by a lady of his acquaintance, a woman of considerable attainments, against accepting the hospitality of a priest who had offered to put him up for the night on his way to the North. "Why?" asked Mortimer. "You are a Catholic, I know, but you are suspected," was the reply, "and you may be spirited away." The morning papers were sceptical and one or two of them satirical regarding Rome's habit of spiriting people away, but the chief organs of the press may have been, as was alleged, worked by the Romanists, and the editor of *The Times* may have been a Jesuit. But some of the obscurer prints made capital out of the Bishop's now famous spirited-away speech; the *Anti-Papist* covered itself with glory, and Mrs. Balsam purchased a hat with a feather in it and became quite the lady.

But to whom had the Bishop referred? To someone he knew, of course, and presumably to someone near and dear to him. To his wife? No; she was living in Rome, a figure well-known to the "Neri." To his son? No; he was a Jesuit scholastic. He was referring to his niece, Lady Eva Fitzgower. Indeed, and who was she? Now came the turn of "Maud," "Anastasia," "Georgy," "Birdie," "Lollipop" and other contributors to the society press. "Who was Lady Eva Fitzgower? Why, one of the most prominent ladies of contemporary society, only daughter of the Great Lord Newark, fiancée of the late Duke of Oakham, the lady who made such a stir last season by inducing her friends to join the Church of Rome, and

who disappeared suddenly last July on the same day as the well-known priest, Monsignor Vancelour—"quite too lovely," "a magnificent brunette," "a superb beauty with a look of tragedy in her eyes," "a romance," "a dream," "a poem." The *Comet* man now had his turn. He had seen the lady at a public dinner at which a very exalted personage was present. The "personage" was seated next to a plain woman, and glanced repeatedly at the glorious girl opposite him. The *Comet* man suggested that a mistake had been made, and that the "personage" had been provided with the wrong partner. Then the facetious scribe gave place to the purveyor of sensation, and "Abduction of a Lady of Title by Priests!" "The Lady who was spirited away by the Romish Church!" "Striking Romance of a Titled Lady and the Church of Rome!" "Marquis's Daughter and Monsignor!" "The Priest and the Lady! Realistic Details!" were to be read side by side with "W. G. at it again!" "They're unable to get Abel out!" "Notts bowling collared!" for the months had passed and summer come round again.

Lady Caterham repaired one day to Winton and showed her brother a paper in which it was stated that he admitted that the "spirited-away" passage in his famous speech had reference to his niece. "Contradict it, Bishop!" she cried. "Contradict it! I know priests, and whatever they are they're not fools! They'll have something to say! They know how to hit back!"

"The statement is not accurate," returned the

Bishop. "I have *not* said that the passage had reference to—to the girl who was once our niece. But I decline to be drawn by the press. I have nothing to add to the passage. I stated what I believed and what I still believe to be true."

The scandal grew and grew; Lady Eva Fitzgower's name became a household word; and Catholics were wondering why official Rome remained silent under so grave a charge.

At the nick of time the following correspondence appeared in the press:

"La Quiete," Sorrento, Italy,
December 15th.

My dear Lord Cardinal

A lady who has recently joined us here tells me that an extraordinary rumour is current in England concerning me. It seems almost incredible, but she tells me that a story is being circulated that I have been spirited away by a priest or priests of the Catholic Church. Who could have invented such an absurd story? Why was it invented? As you know, I travelled to Rome with the intention of entering a convent there, put up at the Hotel Minerva and stopped there a week, presented myself at one of the Carmelite Convents and remained there for a few weeks, after which the Prioress told me that I had not a vocation. Since then I have been staying at Sorrento with the kind ladies of "La Quiete" who like myself have retired temporarily from the world.

I send this letter to your Eminence that you may

publish it if it is necessary, but not otherwise—not otherwise!

Believe me, with deep respect,

Yours faithfully,

EVA FITZGOWER.

His Eminence Cardinal Grimsby.

CARDINAL'S HOUSE, WESTMINSTER,

December 23rd.

MY DEAR CHILD

I do not propose to publish your letter, at all events for the present. The story that you have been spirited away is, I think, only believed by frantic bigots and enemies of the truth.

May God guide and bless you.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

PETER, CARDINAL-ARCHBISHOP.

The Lady Eva Fitzgower.

CARDINAL'S HOUSE, WESTMINSTER,

May 15th.

MY DEAR CHILD

I intend to publish the letter you sent me last December, and I enclose you a copy of it. The story that you have been spirited away is spreading among the enemies of the Church, and has found its way into the press. You have no doubt heard that it owed its origin to a vague utterance of a kinsman of yours, whom I recommend to your charitable prayers.

May God comfort you.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

PETER, CARDINAL-ARCHBISHOP.

The Lady Eva Fitzgower.

"La Quiete," Sorrento, Italy,
May 18th.

My dear Lord Cardinal

I regret that my letter of December last must be given to the public, but I see the necessity for it. That a kinsman of mine should have joined in the persecution of me is a great blow to me. God has been pleased to send me so many inflictions. I am trying to bear up under this one and crave your Eminence's prayers.

Believe me, with deep respect,

Yours faithfully,

Eva Fitzgower.

His Eminence Cardinal Grimsby.

As may be imagined, these letters created a great sensation. Even after their publication not a few people believed that the girl had been drugged or her reason unhinged by the diabolical arts of the priests; but the immense majority of reasonable English people accepted the statements contained in the letters.

The Cardinal did not allow the matter to drop here; he took the unusual course, warranted perhaps in the circumstances, of publicly alluding to Eva. Addressing a huge meeting in the East-end of London upon the subject of the "Rights of the Poor in a Democracy," he appealed to the British love of fair-play and spirit of manliness. Were God's poor to suffer as of old for their creed? Were her Majesty's Catholic subjects to be left to the fury of bigots and fanatics who hoped to revive the Penal laws? Were the days of

persecution about to return? A lady in high place, a much-afflicted lady, a friend of the poor had of late been subjected to a cowardly persecution, in which a member of her own family, a prelate of the Established Church, had joined. And why? Because she was a Catholic. Grotesque lies had been told about her and repeated in the press; her name was upon the lips of the scoffer, the calumniator, the wine-bibber, the buffoon. What had she done to deserve this? She had given up her place among the great ones of the earth in order to devote herself to charity and prayer.

The speech received great praise, especially in the Radical organs, and led to a revulsion of feeling in favour of Catholics, insomuch that the sale of the *Anti-Papist* dropped considerably, and Mrs. Balsam returned to pettitoes and porter.

Again, in addressing an assembly of the prominent Catholic laity, the Cardinal referred to a lady who had joined the Church and worked in her interests with a zeal and success that recalled the efforts of the saints. She had come among them like a St. Catherine or a St. Teresa, and as might have been expected she had been calumniated by the enemies of God; but what was *not* to have been expected and yet alas! had happened was that her own co-religionists had misunderstood and suspected her, and, when her reputation was assailed, abandoned her to her enemies. Her brother of the faith had turned against her; ay, and her sister!

This speech led to an extraordinary revulsion of

feeling in Eva's favour among Catholics. Those who had disliked and suspected her became the highest in her praise. Anecdotes and legends collected round her name. Even Father Macdonald's "saints" caught up the new enthusiasm; they would indeed have given a high price for a piece of her gown,—have stolen it if they had had the chance!

Another result of the Cardinal's action was that the Bishop of Winton resigned his see on the grounds of ill-health.

EPILOGUE

ABOUT five years after the events narrated a well-known priest, Father White, called upon Father Macdonald, with whom he had been in correspondence on the subject of a biography of the late Cardinal Grimsby that had recently appeared. Father White, in common with the majority of his co-religionists, thought that the biography did injustice to the character of the deceased prelate; and he had undertaken to write another and in his opinion a more accurate life of the Cardinal. In the course of the conversation he said that in examining his Eminence's papers he had come upon the names of Lady Newark, Lady Eva Fitzgower, and Ernest de Keramur, and he asked Father Macdonald for information concerning those persons.

Thereupon Father Macdonald gave him the outline of this narrative and, with many details about the Cardinal which would be out of place here, concluded the history of the persons named.

Lady Newark's career as a leader of "Smart" society did not last long. Her health gave way under repeated attacks of influenza; she quarrelled with Mrs. Wimpole, and retired to a flat in Mayfair, a chronic invalid. From the last accounts of her it would seem that she had submitted her conscience and her temporal affairs to the control of a well-known Father of the Society of Jesus.

Ernest de Keramur was a man in whom Father Macdonald was not much interested. Cardinal Grimsby, on the other hand, had taken a great interest in the young Breton and had regarded him as a mystic. "He has a clean heart," his Eminence had said; "things hidden from us are perhaps revealed to him. Don't laugh at his dreams for they may come true." To judge from Father Macdonald the prelate had helped the young Breton to realise his dream.

After his dismissal from the post of organist of St. Peter's Ernest had gone to Brittany with his mother and lived there for a year upon his savings. The death of three of his kinsmen in the Madagascar campaign had put him in possession of the domain of the Keramurs and made him the head of that ancient race. Shortly afterwards his mother died, and he went to Rome, and was welcomed by the leaders of the society that has remained loyal to the Pope.

In the mean time Lady Eva, having discovered that she was unfitted for the conventual life, had also entered that society; she and Ernest met, their relations became more and more friendly, and, encouraged by the Cardinal, who happened to be in Rome at the

time, Keramur one day proposed marriage to her and was accepted. There was nothing surprising in such a marriage, nor in the circumstances could it be regarded as a *mésalliance.* In Rome the pair were more or less on a footing of equality. Then Lady Eva's position as an unmarried lady in a foreign city with none of her people about her was rather a difficult one. But her married life was of short duration. Notwithstanding Ernest's talent for music and her love for it she discouraged him from pursuing an artistic career. He was a gentleman, a nobleman, not a professional man, and foremost among the accomplishments of such a person should be the ability to ride straight to hounds. Well, Ernest experienced no difficulty in learning to ride; but his wife and his companions had been "at home" in the saddle since their childhood, and he had not. For all that he must equal if not surpass their feats of horsemanship. The result of such an endeavour might have been foretold. He was thrown one day and broke his back. He was killed, but he had realised his dream. Lady Eva conveyed his remains to Brittany where they were buried with pomp, after which the poor woman disappeared; no one, not even the Cardinal, knowing what had become of her. "But I can form a shrewd guess," his Eminence had said.

"And have you been able to ascertain whether he guessed aright?" asked Father White.

"Yes," was the reply, and then Father Macdonald told his companion that a few weeks ago Mr. Frank Mortimer had caught sight of the lady in the East

end of London. She was in the garb of a Sister of Charity, and she was holding the wrists of a drunken man who was about to assault his wife. Upon inquiry Mr. Mortimer learnt that she was known as Sister Teresa, and that the most difficult and dangerous cases were intrusted to her on account of her courage and physical strength.

To live among the roughest people in the community, to scrub floors and perform the humblest tasks, to carry women in her arms, to struggle with low ruffians, to steal bread for starving children, were the self-imposed duties of the once brilliant Eva Fitzgower. And Cardinal Grimsby, a keen student of character, had declared that in the fulfilment of such duties she would attain to peace.

THE END

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